6 POWER GRID MYTHS, *BUSTED*

Hot trend! Grilled in **60 seconds?!** It's time to buy a pizza oven

Cottage Life

MAY 2023

MEET ATLAS & SPENCER

A RAD LITTLE CABIN IN THE WOODS

MAKE YOUR CANOE *DOUBLE* AS A SAILBOAT

Why biodiversity matters

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The *CL* guide to keeping it simple

May 2023
VOLUME 36 NUMBER 2

Grill pizza for dinner (p. 82) ✺ Embrace tiny (p. 53 and 62) ✺ Have a drink, take in the view (p. 20) ✺ Stop paddling, use wind power (p. 74) ✺ Save baby turtles (and your back) the easy way (p. 29) ✺

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This iconic animal can beat you in a race just days after being born. BY TIM TINER

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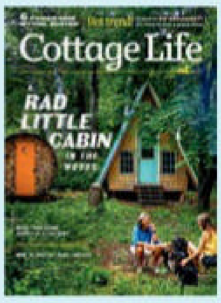
They're the words you only hear in cottage country. First up, it's the thunderbox!

NailSlicer
FRAMING
CRESCENT
24T



COVER PHOTO: KEVIN BELANGER

Did you think that the small, round structure beside the A-frame was a traditional barrel sauna? Think again! It's actually the outhouse that contains Andrew Szeto's composting toilet at his Low, Que., cottage, which he shares with his girlfriend, Amber. Turn to p. 62 to read all about this off-grid couple.

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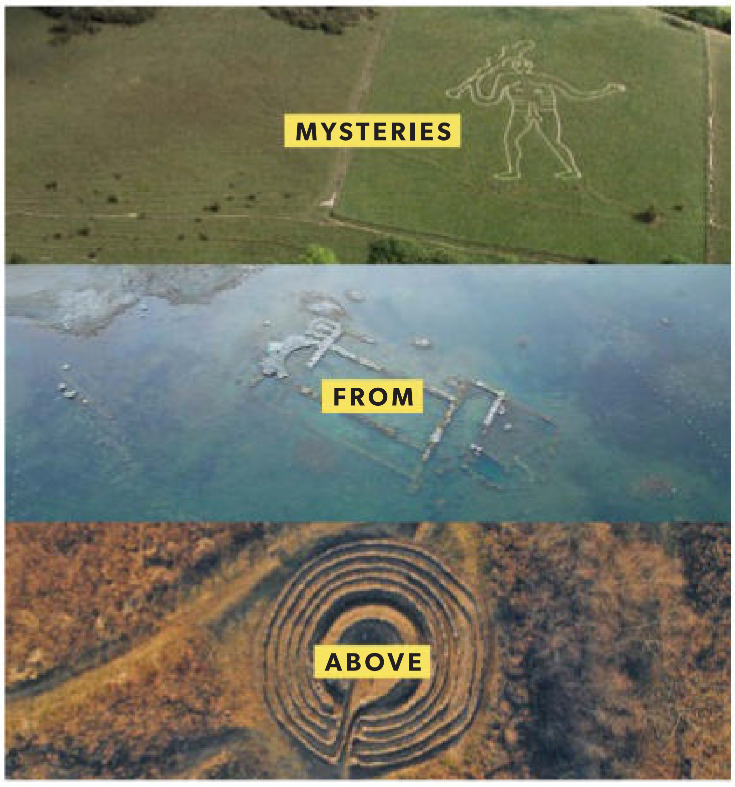
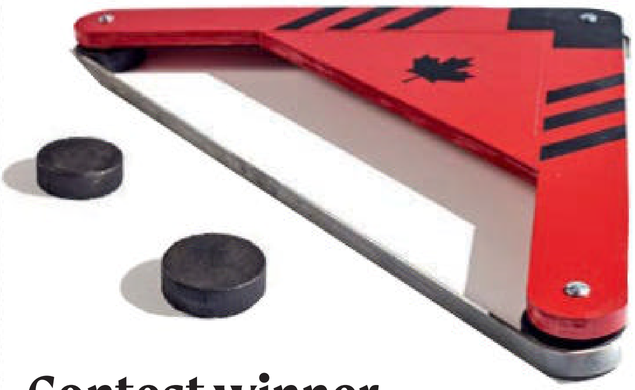
Mysteries From Above is back and uncovering more secrets from a bird's-eye view. In the second season, the show investigates an unusual pattern in the Nevada desert, a long-forgotten network of Native American earthworks, and others. It returns on Sunday, April 2 at 9 p.m. ET/PT, on Cottage Life TV, now in free preview. Find your channel at *tv.cottagelife.com*, and don't miss the season premiere.





Contest winner

Out of nearly 800 entries, we randomly selected Carole Edwards, from Orleans, Ont., as the winner of our hockey puck rebounder giveaway. *Félicitations* to Carole, who plans to share her prize with her son and grandson. Sign up for our newsletters to be among the first to hear about new contests.

Cottage Life Main Stage

It's showtime!

Alysha Vandertogt, our senior associate editor, is talking new cottage tech and how to deter critters at the Ottawa Cottage Life & Backyard Show. Buy tickets online: *shows.cottagelife.com*.

FAMILY MATTERS
HOW TO SUCCEED AT COTTAGE SUCCESSION

Newsletter alert

If we've learned anything from HBO's viral hit drama *Succession*, it's that you should start planning earlier rather than later, especially if you have children. Which is why we're launching Family Matters, a brand new newsletter, to help you get a head start. Over the course of five editions, our experts, including succession planning lawyer, Peter Lillico, will give you a free primer on how to skillfully avoid the pitfalls of passing down your family cottage. Subscribe now at *cottagelife.com/succession*.

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Peter Soroye

Conservation biologist Peter Soroye grew up camping every summer at Algonquin Provincial Park. “You would see bears and hear the call of loons,” he says. “Being outside, exploring, that’s always been part of my life.” He took an ecology course in university and was blown away that conservation work could be a job. “I wanted to make sure the places that I was learning about were going to be around for me to see one day.” One of those places is the Minesing Wetlands, the subject of “Why Biodiversity Matters” (p. 41). Another of Peter’s favourites is the Rideau River, where he lives in Ottawa. “There are so many green spaces around it. I can be outside and experience nature no matter the season.”

Sage Dakota

After spending eight years eating her way through Singapore, food stylist Sage Dakota knew she wanted to work with food. She enrolled in a culinary program in Singapore, went to George Brown College once she moved back to Toronto, and then worked at a wine bar in the city. “That’s where I learned how to plate and develop a specific style,” says Sage. You can see her work in our pizza oven grill guide (p. 82), where she uses ingredients such as mangoes and pistachios—trust us, you’ll never want plain old pepperoni again. Sage’s go-to toppings? “Hot honey or a handful of herbs,” she says. “Freshness on your pizza really levels up the flavour.” You can find more of Sage’s work in *Chatelaine*.

Behind the scenes Rain or shine, but mostly rain

No amount of planning could have prepared us for the rainstorm that took place during our grill guide photo shoot. From the moment the team woke up at this cottage on Black River, Ont., the entire set-up had to be changed—they put up three exterior lights to fake a beautiful sunny day, held an umbrella over food stylist Sage Dakota while she cooked the pizzas (no soggy crust here!), and constantly squeegeed the deck to remove all evidence of the storm. Whatever the weather throws at us, we know how to make magazine magic—take a look on p. 82.

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COTTAGE LIFE PROMOTION

TIMELESS STYLE

Why this iconic Canadian clothing brand has us excited for cottage season

WE ALL HAVE FAVOURITE MEMORIES FROM THE LAKE. For some, it's seeing our kids' first cannonball off the dock. For others, it's the outdoor dinners with friends that last until the sky fills with stars.

For many of us, those nostalgic moments were wrapped in a treasured sweatshirt that kept us cozy around the campfire. And if you grew up cottaging anywhere in Canada, it just might have featured the iconic Northern Reflections loon.

No matter what you love most about the lake, you'll find a perfect outfit in the iconic Canadian brand's line of easy-to-care-for, durable, nature-inspired essentials. So we partnered with Northern Reflections to pick out our favourite pairings for everything we love doing at the cottage.

Sipping early-morning coffee

If you're stealthy enough to wake before your guests, savouring coffee on the dock as the mist ambles off the lake is the perfect start to a cottage day. But even if you're sipping solo, the Cable Knit Pullover combines comfy with stylish.

Embracing a campfire's glow

Nothing says "cottage" like a crackling campfire. And there's no better fit for embracing the cozy glow than the Iconic Loon Logo Sweatshirt—except maybe the ultra-comfy matching sweatpants.

Adventuring on the lake

Whether you're island hopping for a picnic or just cruising with friends, the Comfort Crop Pants go from helm to harbour in style, with super-soft fabric and ample stretch.

Entertaining on deck

We dine outdoors to immerse ourselves in nature, so it's fitting that many of Northern Reflections' patterns, including the floral flow of the Capped-Sleeve Button Front Top, are inspired by the landscape we love.

Stargazing on a chilly night

Opening weekend can't come soon enough in cottage country, and even the chilliest of springs won't stop us from escaping the city lights and building the season's first campfire under the stars. Luckily, the stretchy, soft comfort of the Microsand Jean Jacket helps us embrace those crisp evenings.

Braving the Friday-evening scramble

We love to arrive, but we dread the drive. Get the jump on Friday's highway hustle with the Faux Leather Barn Jacket, which glides from your office to opening weekend without any extra stops along the way.

Heading out for ice cream

Driving into town for peach sorbet and a new book for the dock? A pair of Comfort Bermuda Shorts are a pull-on essential, and they fit flawlessly with any breezy top.

Tackling DIY projects

The hammock is calling, but we all nap a little easier once we've bitten off a chunk of our chore list. Roll up the super-soft French terry sleeves of the Basic Perfect Hoodie, and earn the perfect afternoon snooze.

NORTHERN REFLECTIONS

Ready for spring? Find your next cottage essentials at northernreflections.com.

We need to talk about something

THE SUBJECT I'VE chosen for this column, the environment, typically isn't very popular. The proof is in our web traffic: anytime we post content about the climate crisis (still with me?), our click rates—the main metric we use to measure an article's success—go down.

I find this depressing. But I get it. Because more often than not, I avoid this subject too.

I don't blame our readers for skipping stories about an animal species disappearing, an ice cap melting, or a flash flood devastating yet another community. These days, it feels like we're stumbling from one generational catastrophe to another, and the news is unrelenting. At a certain point—you could argue we're well past it—avoiding this content is simple self-preservation—of our peace of mind and of the remaining hope we have that everything is going to be okay.

Yet, this coping mechanism is a conundrum for me and my fellow editors. Our job is to educate and inspire cottagers about the issues that matter at the lake. But if that lake is threatened by blue-green algae or its shorelines are under pressure from over-development, and we *don't* tell you, we aren't doing our job. The climate crisis is the problem that won't go away without a joint, hugely concerted effort, which can't happen if we all bury our heads in the (quickly disappearing) sand. If we don't warn you about the consequences of climate change, we can't help you reverse them.

Cottagers are stewards of our rural lands. We live side-by-side with water and wetlands and forests, and we can see up close how magical—and vulnerable—they are. We are aware of our responsibility to protect them, despite how challenging that honour can sometimes be.

At Cottage Life, we are steadfast in our belief that solutions are possible and that they start with a more nuanced understanding of the problem. It's in that spirit that, with this issue, we're introducing a new regular column, Forces for Nature, which will educate you on how our environment thrives and also bring you hope for its future health. In "All Creatures Great and Small" (p. 41), Peter Soroye from Wildlife Conservation Society Canada reminds us that Canada is the only home for a staggering number of species and that we have a responsibility to protect all of them—even ones we don't care for.

There's work to be done to heal our natural world, and it's easy to feel pessimistic. We need optimism to succeed, which is hard work. But isn't that work—of finding hope in the dark—worth it?

Michelle

@MKONTHEDOCK

How to win at succession

If you've ever attended one of Peter Lillico's sessions at a Cottage Life Show, you'll know that, in these parts, he's something of a rock star, not just an estate planning lawyer. That's why we've teamed up with him on Family Matters, our newly launched, free newsletter about handing down the cottage. Go to *cottagelife.com/newsletters* to sign up.

How are you going greener at your cottage? Share your efforts at mkelly@cottagelife.com.

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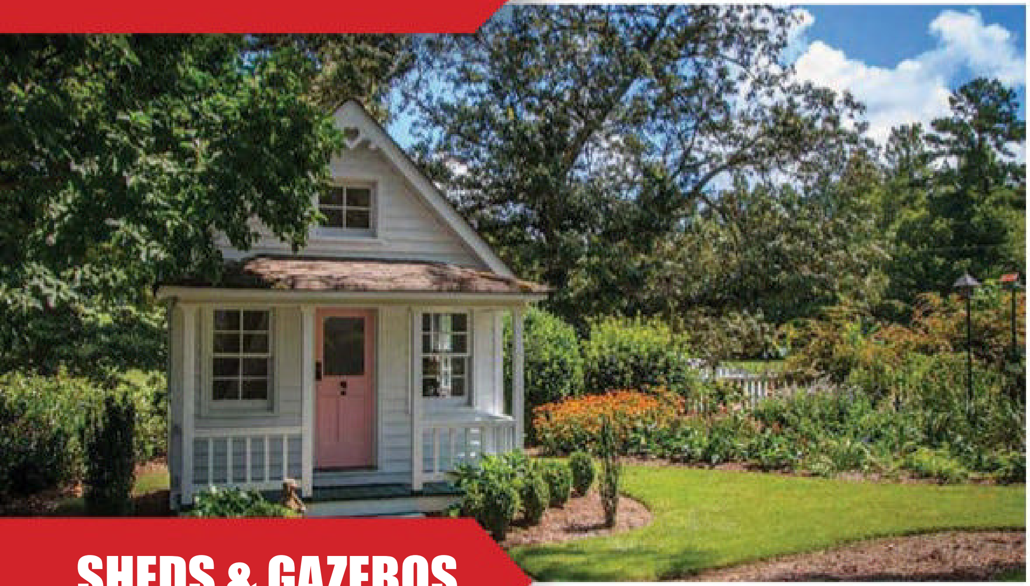

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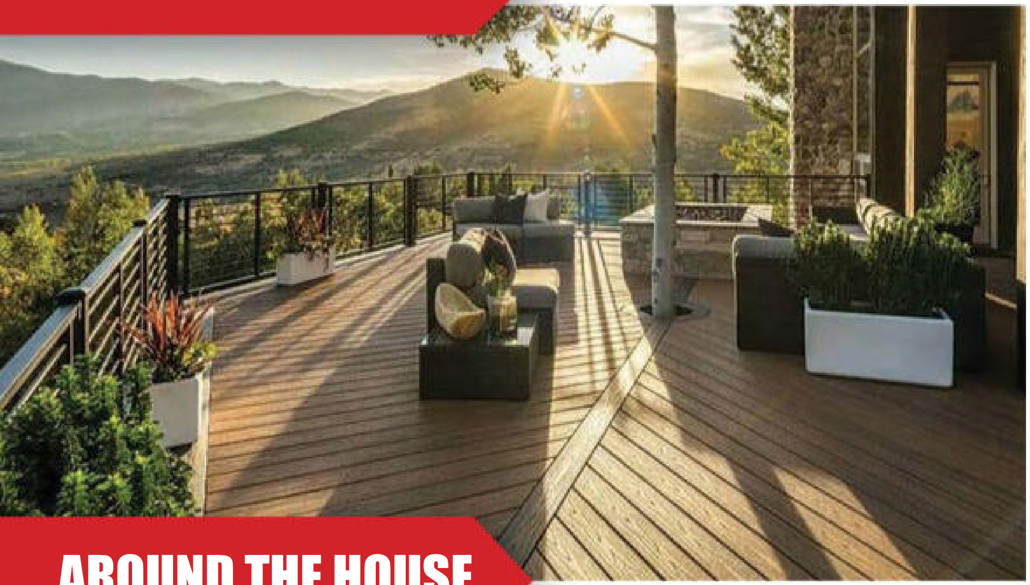

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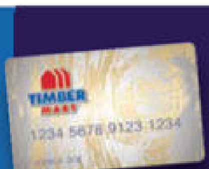

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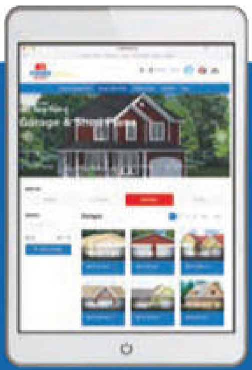

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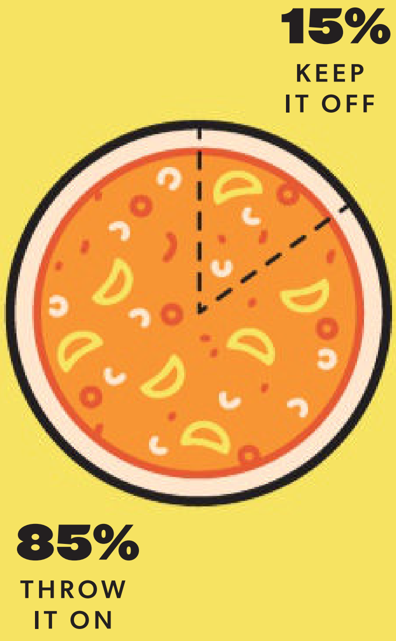
We asked on Facebook: pineapple on pizza, bring on the tropics or steer clear?



FOR SOME UNIQUE PIZZA TOPPING COMBOS, TURN TO P. 82.

It's all about compromise

We shared "I Hate the Cottage—What Now?" (Zim Weighs In, Oct '21) on Facebook (about one partner loving the cottage and the other—*erm*, not so much). Your comments proved there's always a way to make life at the lake work:

"Over the years, I've lured my husband—we've gone to cute pubs, music festivals, and art tours. He gets involved with cooking, reads, and loves to sit and watch the sunset." *—Wendy Harrison*

"My partner doesn't like the cottage. I grew up going to mine, so I'm okay with it. I'll go without him for the season—he doesn't mind, and neither do I. I'm not giving up the family cottage just because he doesn't like it. He only comes out if there's a family gathering."*—Janet H. Colling Flint*

ILLUSTRATION: JARRED BRIGGS

Death of an icon?

It's hard to imagine our lakes without loons. But losing these ancient birds is a real possibility. Here's what's threatening them and how you can help

Loons vs. cormorants

I loved "Death of an Icon?" (Mar/Apr '23) by Julia Nunes. One thing I'm left wondering about is the threat of cormorants. I live on Stoney Lake in the Kawarthas, Ont., and the increase in the cormorant population each year is frightening. They're fish eaters, and I wonder if they also affect the survival of our loons? *—Joyce Corner, Stoney Lake, Ont.*

Joyce, we reached out to Doug Tozer of Birds Canada, and this is what he had to say:

"Data from Birds Canada's Canadian Lakes Loon Survey shows that the number of six-week-old young per pair of loons per year declines more steeply on lakes without cormorants and less steeply on lakes with cormorants. These results suggest that lakes with cormorants provide better *breeding habitats for loons than lakes without. This is probably because lakes with cormorants have high numbers of fish, which also benefit loons. The results also suggest that declines in loon productivity are not being caused by cormorants."*

Toilet paper thieves

Like many cottage owners this season, we've enjoyed an infestation of mice, but our story really takes the cake. Recently, upon arriving at the cottage for a monthly check-up, we found evidence of mice prepping for nesting in the empty bathroom drawers. The bottom drawer was filled to the brim with torn-up toilet paper. However, in the middle drawer, there was not only more torn-up paper but also a full toilet paper roll.

How on earth did the mice get it in there? There's a small gap between the sink area and the drawers, but I can't even fit my hand through it.

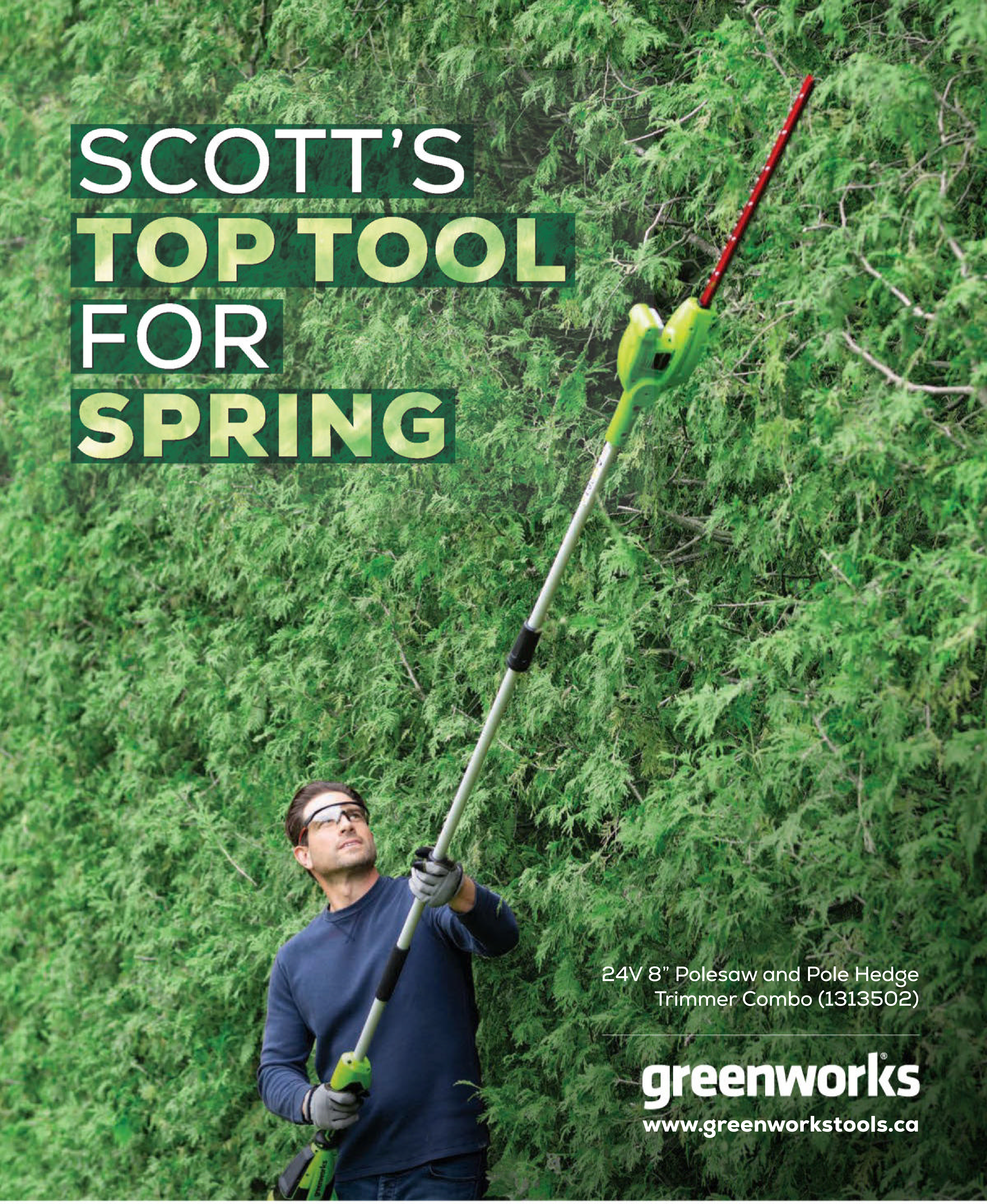
Can anyone tell us how these resourceful little buggers got that toilet roll in the drawer?*—Alex and Richard Remillard, Lac Bitobi, Que.*

Great question! We'll add it to the file for possible use in our Cottage Q&A column. Keep your eye on future issues.

Shutting the critters out

In reading "Cottage Q&A: How do I Mouse-Proof My Fridge?" (*cottagelife.com*), you discussed how leaving a fridge wide open in the off-season will deter mice, while propping it open a bit is the equivalent of rolling out the red carpet.

I had a similar problem with mice setting up shop around my snowmobile engine. I got rid of the cover and left the hood wide open, and I haven't seen evidence of mice since. It really works! *—Dayle Hogg, via email* *(Cont'd on p. 15)*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Cont'd from p. 13

FACEBOOK COMMENT OF THE MONTH

"I've noticed that people say, 'I'm heading to the cottage.' It's always 'the' cottage, never 'my' cottage. Like we all share one communal cottage."

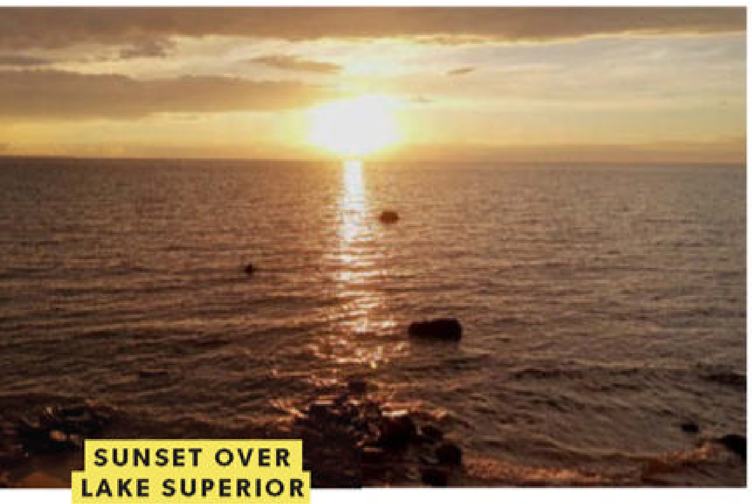
—Rachelle Anne Redford

HAVE MORE COTTAGE-ISMS? TURN TO P. 98 TO CHECK OUT OUR NEW COTTAGE GLOSSARY.

Drink it all in

Excellent edition of *The Great Outdoors* newsletter on March 7. I saw the photos in "Unreal Places to Watch the Sunset Across Canada" (*cottagelife.com*), and I have a sunset photo to share that I think could be in this group (below).

Every summer, my wife and I go to Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., my hometown. My niece and her husband live there and have built a beautiful cottage on Lake Superior. It's not on a bay—it looks onto the lake and faces west. We usually spend at least a week at the cottage every summer. Almost every night is a postcard.
—*Mark Thorp, via email*



SUNSET OVER LAKE SUPERIOR

MARK THORP

Are we small-towners yet?

I just read "5 Tips For Moving to a Small Town" (*cottagelife.com*). We moved to a small town and live very remotely. It's true that you need to spend an entire winter, and if you still enjoy it, then you can consider yourself a small-towner. Then it's like a vacation when you visit friends and family in the big city.
—*Nimet Dincel-Inceoglu, via Facebook*

Showing off the subfloor

I can relate to "Cottage Q&A: Is It Okay to Paint the Subflooring?" (*cottagelife.com*). When I ripped out the jute carpet in my 1960s house, the subflooring was made up of large 4-by-8-foot sheets of plywood. I rather liked the woody grain, so I applied two coats of varnish over various green stains on some of the sheets. It lasted nicely for decades. We lived in a rural farm-type area, and it suited our lifestyle back then.—*Taneda Dawes, via Facebook*

The collection never ends

As I was browsing through my collection of *Cottage Life* magazines, each one carefully preserved in a binder or slipcover, I reflected on the happiness my cottage has brought my family and our guests. You've been an important part of our life for more than three decades. Glancing at the silhouette of the loon elicits a Pavlovian reaction of peace.

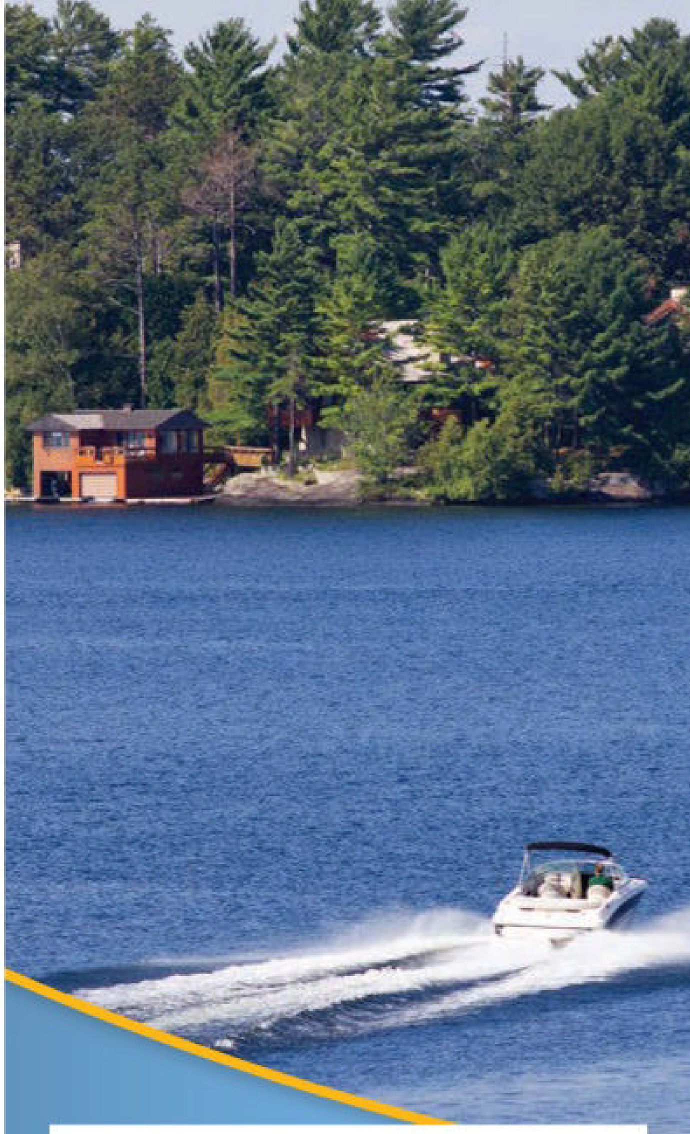
I built a custom set of shelves to house my collection (with room for expansion, of course). When I look at all of the issues, I see 33 years of happy memories, visits from guests, and a nearly 20-year battle to completely mouse-proof our place. (We are almost there!)

I'm hoping to double my collection in size before I'm finished. Please never stop publishing.—*Frank Hutchingame, Lac Pemichangan, Que.*

Catch them if you can

I just read "Can I Stop the Mouse Stink?" (Cottage Q&A, Mar/Apr '23). We had a problem with our cat urinating on our concrete floor and found a paint that seals the smell into the floor. No more problem. Also, my cousin, who was an exterminator, told us to get an Oust-a-Mouse for outdoors—it's best to catch mice before they come inside. We haven't had any mice indoors at our cottage since installing one.—*Anne Gray, Moose Lake, Ont.*

Send us a note: letters@cottagelife.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



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AVIVA

Waterfront

Prime cottage season is here! Step 1. Get to lake. Step 2. Have some chore-free fun.

← BY DOG! MURPHY IS CAPTIVATED!

TORI OVERBEEKE

21 *Whaa?* Black bears and grizzly bears are hooking up?

22 Don't hate the bacon, use the grease. Here's what to do with it.

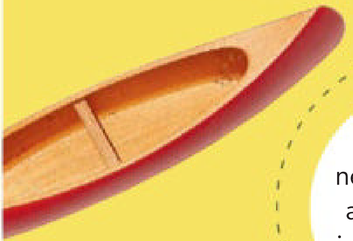
24 Giant! Cloning! Fish! are terrorizing B.C. lakes. True story.

26 A home equity line of credit got these folks their dream.

QUICK POLL

FIRST THINGS FIRST

We asked *CL* staff and readers: "After all the chores are done on opening-up weekend, what's the first thing that you do?"



THE EASIEST THING TO DO IS USE THE COTTAGE YEAR-ROUND (IF YOU CAN), SO THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN OPENING WEEKEND.

CHORES

SNACKS

DRINKS

LAKE

SOCIAL

NATURE

DOCK

RELAX

Relax under the big pines, breeze blowing through them, coffee in hand. Just soaking in the quiet of nature.

I don't understand. What do you mean when you say "after all the chores are done?"

Chips and beer!

Am I the first one to mention a cold beer? Something hoppy and tart.

Grab a glass of wine, hit the Muskoka chair, and take a nap.

Invite the neighbours over, and rope them into helping with a chore.

Make a list of everything we need to fix.

Grill hot dogs! We've missed you, nitrites.

Drink in the hammock!

Eat an entire bag of chips.

I don't know, but I guarantee it'll involve wine and cheese.

Make a drink. No, make a pitcher of drinks.

Hit the deck, take in the fresh air, and savour the view.

Visit the neighbours, and get roped into helping them with a chore.

WTF (Wine Time Finally).

Wine all the way.

Sit down on the front deck and enjoy a drink alfresco before the flies catch on.

Glass of wine.

Stop. Hammock time!

Sleep.

Coffee on the dock watching the sunrise.

Have a Moscow mule at sunset.

Read a good book. Or a bad book.

Wine and Muskoka chairs on the dock.

Collapse in the Muskoka chairs by the lake.

Read this page of this issue. Meta!

Cannonball!

Sit on the dock. What else?

Get some part of my body in the water, no matter how cold it is.

Throw the tinny in, fire up the 9.9 Merc.

Get my precious dock time in!

Walk through the woods.

Listen for loons.

Invite our lake friends over for docktails.

Sit in the sun for 10-ish minutes until I'm sweaty, then straight to the lake!

Get in the boat and tour the lake.

Watch the waves roll in.

Visit friends and neighbours.

Listen to the spring peepers singing at dusk.

Instagram the hell out of everything.

Put on last year's swimsuit. Promptly take off.

IN TOWN

WE ASKED COTTAGER Andrew Szeto, whose Low, Que., cabin we feature on p. 62, to share his favourite don't-miss spots in nearby Wakefield. His formula for the perfect outing: do something active, have a snack, and hit the water.

Get active by hiking the local trails—one option is the Sentiers Wakefield Trails system (*sentierswakefieldtrails.ca*). They're well-maintained (but watch for bears, says Andrew). Too tame? Try bouldering—free climbing low to the ground—at Klimat Bouldering + Fitness Gym (*klimat.ca*).

Grab a snack at the Wakefield Market (*marchewakefieldmarket.ca*) where Boucanerie Chelsea (*boucaneriechelsea.com*) has a stall. Andrew hits it up for seafood, including smoked fish, salmon jerky, and inexpensive—but delicious—sashimi. The family owned Wakefield General Store (*wakefieldgeneralstore.ca*) features fresh local meat, deli, and produce. Out late? Kaffé 1870 (*facebook.com/kaffe1870*) has live music.

Take a dip Andrew's swimming hole of choice is the Wakefield public docks on the main street, across from Expéditions Wakefield (*expeditionswakefield.com*), which offers canoe rentals.

WANT MORE INFO ON WAKEFIELD, QUE.? VISIT *DESTINATIONWAKEFIELD.COM*.

OPPOSITE: LIAM MOGAN. THIS PAGE: PORTRAIT OF ANDREW SZETO, KEVIN BELANGER; BEAR, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/TOSEEG

GRIZZLY BEAR
URSUS ARCTOS HORRIBILIS

NATURE

She ain't grizzly, she just looks that way

BLACK BEARS ARE black, and grizzly bears are brown, right? Turns out, it's not so simple. Some black bears are, in fact, brown—and perhaps increasingly so. A new study published in *Current Biology* sheds light on the cause.

"Sometimes called cinnamon bears, black bears can appear in a variety of shades: a chocolate, a blond, a brown," says Emily Puckett, an assistant professor of biological sciences at the University of Memphis.

Puckett wanted to know whether black bears are appearing brown due to interbreeding between grizzlies and black bears. "We had a reasonable hypothesis that it was an interspecies movement of genes," she says. But the answer to that, she and her team discovered, is no. After studying research from the '70s and '80s that looked at the percentage of black bears in Canada and the U.S. and the frequency of brown coat colour, the researchers determined that the colour difference probably arose from a dominant gene mutation. They then did a genetic analysis on tissue samples from hundreds of black bears and a small number of grizzly bears. They concluded that the "cinnamon morph" is caused by a mutation in the TYRP1 gene and that the mutation "was 9,360 years—or 1,440 generations—old."

So why did the mutation occur? The researchers tested several theories; it's possible, for example, that a cinnamon coat gives bears an advantage in some circumstances. In forest habitats, bears might blend in more if they're black. "But in more edge habitat, where the forest cover is more open, a brown gene might be more favoured," says Puckett.

The researchers saw the brown version of the TYRP1 gene showing up most frequently in parts of the U.S. and decreasing—but present—beyond the Rocky Mountains. In Canada, they've found it around the Great Lakes and in Manitoba and Ontario. So, who knows when one could wander past your cabin? And in the meantime, we can say that for some bears, at least, cinnamon is the new black.—LIANN BOBECHKO

GROUP EFFORTS

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

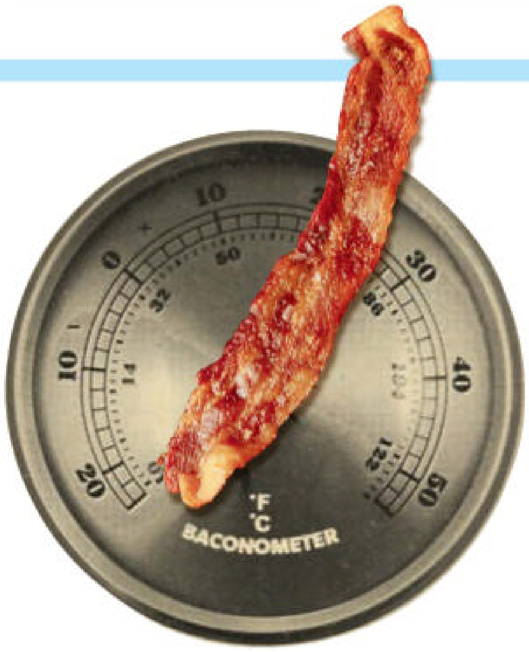
ROBERT LONGWORTH HAS been a cottager on Smith Bay, near Port Loring, Ont., since 1970. Like others on the lake, he's made decades of treasured memories. A typical year is packed with community events: a New Year's Eve party in January, then curling on Family Day weekend. There are March Break events for the kids and to celebrate Victoria Day. In the summer, one neighbour holds a pig roast; another, a fish fry.

Yet, "even though we're a close-knit community, there are people that you don't necessarily see at the annual Labour Day corn roast," says Robert, the founder of the Smith Bay Ratepayers' Association.

So why not come up with a way that the cottagers could, along with documenting their memories, share their stories and the history of their cottages with others on the lake, thought Robert and the other association members. The group formed a committee and, with cottager contributions, compiled a commemorative book to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ratepayers' association in 1998. The simple booklet was 231 pages and black and white, "but it was really successful," says Robert. "So when our 50th anniversary was coming up, we thought, Let's do another one."

The second edition of *Memories of Smith Bay*—352 pages and colour photos—offers a retrospective window into the cottage lives of those on the lake, weaving shots of pets and joyous family portraits with stories collected from Smith Bay cottagers.

Memories of Smith Bay
50th Anniversary
Smith Bay Ratepayers Association
Lily and William
The cottage will ALWAYS be "Monty's Place" to us.
The Longworths Lot 23
A huge thank you to everyone who submitted photographs. We received so many that we could not use them all.


BACONOMETER
°F
°C

COTTAGE LOGIC

WHERE SHOULD THE FAT GO?

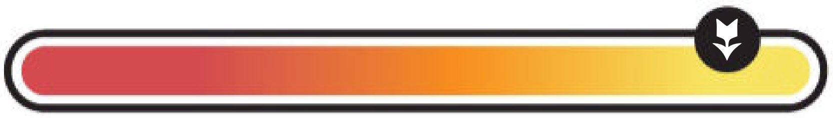
Nothing screams "cottage breakfast" like a big frying pan of side bacon—one of the fattiest pork products you can consume. (So? *It's the cottage.*) But what to do with the grease?

LEGEND

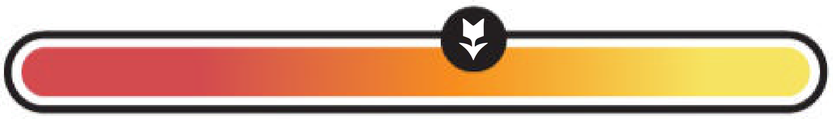
● **Make it bacon!** Do it

● **Make it bacon?** You decide

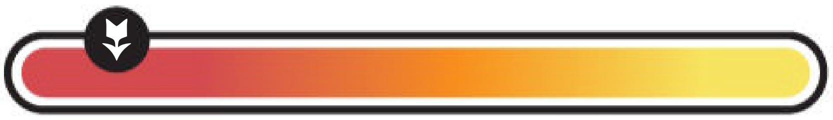
● **Don't make it bacon!** Don't do it



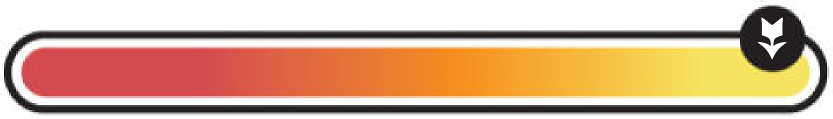
Season your cast-iron frying pan.
It'll work as well as any seasoning agent.



Turn it into mousetrap bait.
Mice are attracted to fatty foods, but unlike peanut butter, grease will go rancid without refrigeration.



Use it instead of suet as bird feed.
Commercial bacon contains preservatives that can become concentrated in the fat; suet cakes are safer.



Make it a butter replacement.
The only thing better than corn on the cob is corn on the cob that tastes like bacon.

The association's book committee emailed flyers to cottage owners, asking them to submit photos and stories. As with the first book, Robert's next-door neighbour Judy Simon, a graphic designer, did the design work.

"We got amazing participation," says Robert. And the cottagers loved the end result. "To say that the reaction was overwhelming would be an understatement." The books sold for $25 each (the proceeds went back into the association, and allowed the group to order extra books to have on hand for new members). Many cottagers bought multiple copies.

It's been a great experience to "create a piece of memorabilia that people will be passing on to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren," says Robert. Will there be a 75th anniversary edition of *Memories*? Perhaps, he says. "But maybe we'll leave that for another generation."—SRIVINDHYA KOLLURU

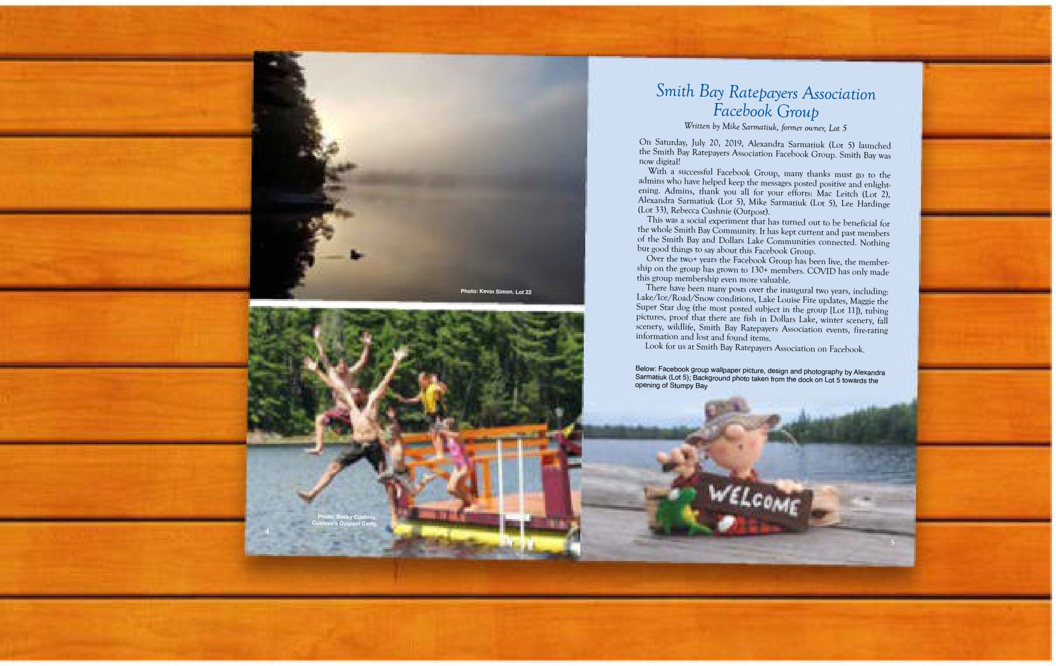


Photo: Kevin Simon, Lot 22

Photo: Becky Cushnie, Cushnie's Outpost Camp

4

Smith Bay Ratepayers Association Facebook Group

Written by Mike Sarmatiuk, former owner, Lot 5

On Saturday, July 20, 2019, Alexandra Sarmatiuk (Lot 5) launched the Smith Bay Ratepayers Association Facebook Group. Smith Bay was now digital!

With a successful Facebook Group, many thanks must go to the admins who have helped keep the messages posted positive and enlightening. Admins, thank you all for your efforts: Mac Leitch (Lot 2), Alexandra Sarmatiuk (Lot 5), Mike Sarmatiuk (Lot 5), Lee Hardinge (Lot 33), Rebecca Cushnie (Outpost).

This was a social experiment that has turned out to be beneficial for the whole Smith Bay Community. It has kept current and past members of the Smith Bay and Dollars Lake Communities connected. Nothing but good things to say about this Facebook Group.

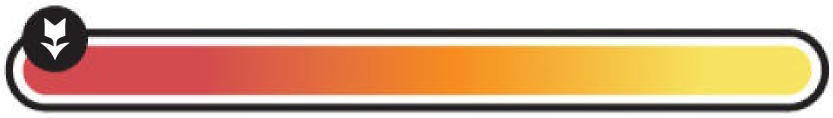
Over the two+ years the Facebook Group has been live, the membership on the group has grown to 130+ members. COVID has only made this group membership even more valuable.

There have been many posts over the inaugural two years, including: Lake/Ice/Road/Snow conditions, Lake Louise Fire updates, Maggie the Super Star dog (the most posted subject in the group [Lot 11]), tubing pictures, proof that there are fish in Dollars Lake, winter scenery, fall scenery, wildlife, Smith Bay Ratepayers Association events, fire-rating information and lost and found items.

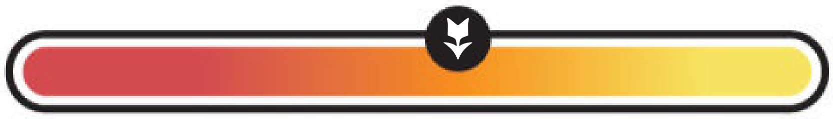
Look for us at Smith Bay Ratepayers Association on Facebook.

Below: Facebook group wallpaper picture, design and photography by Alexandra Sarmatiuk (Lot 5); Background photo taken from the dock on Lot 5 towards the opening of Stumpy Bay

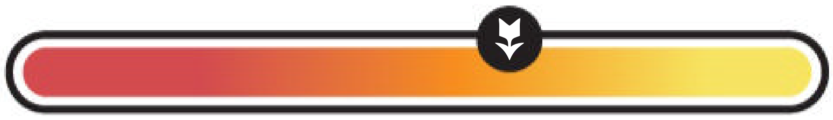
5



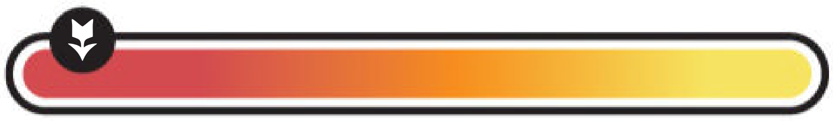
Dump it down the drain.
Never! Ever! It'll clog pipes and mess up your septic system.



Turn it into homemade lip balm.
Sure, if your SO wants to make out with a piece of bacon. (But at the cottage, you probably want a lip balm with SPF.)

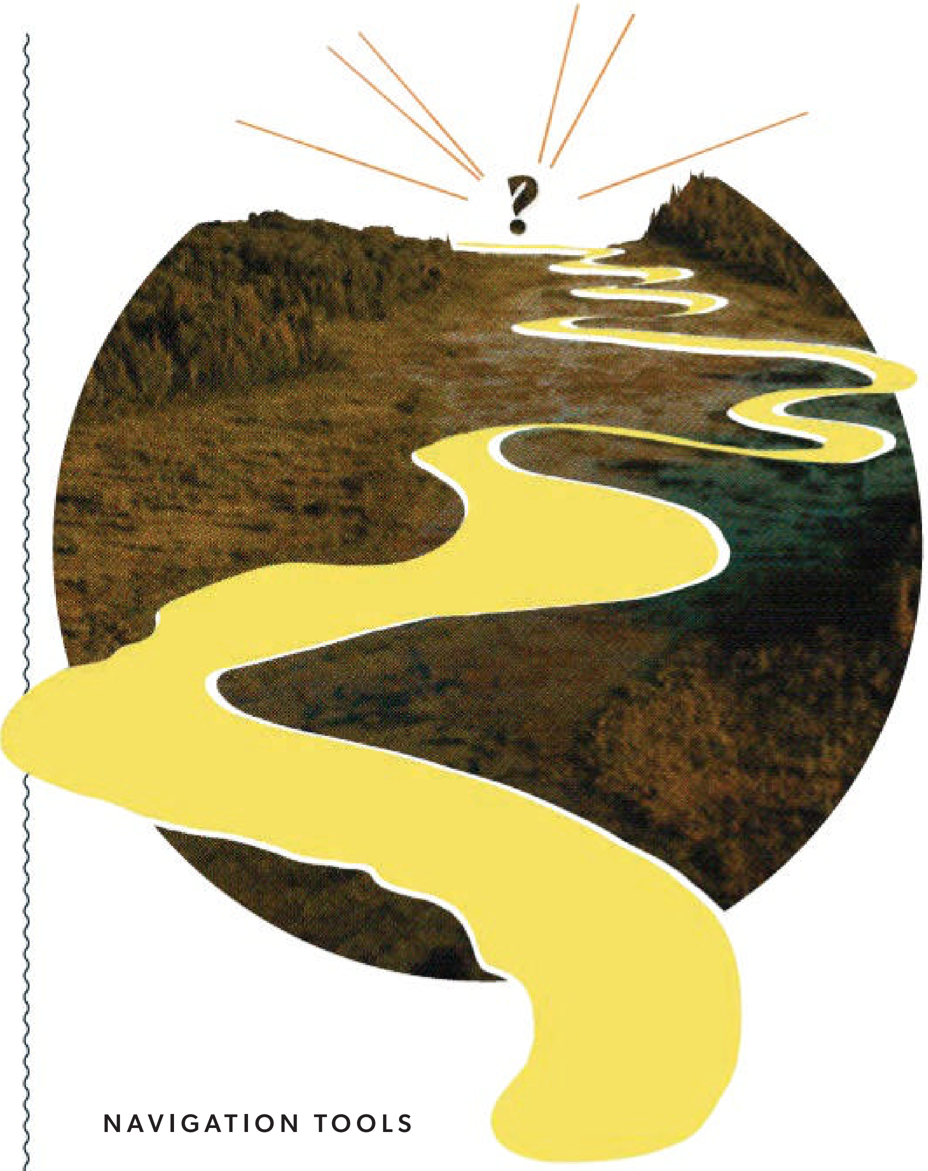


Use it as a lubricant.
If you're out of WD-40, a dab of grease could, for example, silence a squeaky door hinge. But who is ever out of WD-40?



Chuck it outside.
If dry dog food will attract bears, you can bet a whole bunch of bacon grease will.

COLLAGES, TAYLOR KRISTAN



NAVIGATION TOOLS

What's in a name?

THERE'S A RIVER just across the street from my house. When I go outside in the morning, it smells and feels like I'm at the cottage. I love that. The waterway is called the Assiniboine, one of two major rivers that wind through Winnipeg. It's of Indigenous origin, as many places are in this country. That doesn't cross the minds of many Canadians. It should.

The Assiniboine River's name comes from the Assiniboine people, whose traditional lands in Canada were southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. The word means "those who cook by placing hot stones in water." It took only a few minutes to research that. Discovering the meaning of the word has strengthened what the river, and where I live, means to me.

I think there's a benefit in figuring out whether or not your lake is in an Indigenous language or derives from an Indigenous word. I've found, in the course of my career, that fostering connections creates accountability. Our lands and waters are sick, and even if we don't agree on everything, we must agree we need to do whatever we can to keep them healthy. So, what are some lakes and rivers around you that you could learn more about and connect to? Do some research; online is a good place to start. (I used the Canadian Encyclopedia, the Great Lakes Guide, and Britannica.) Connecting to your waterways will generate intention to protect them, just as it did for the Indigenous people who have cared for them for thousands of years.—DAVID A. ROBERTSON

THAT'S WILD!

Who's your daddy?

Fact: it's more common for a healthy female white-tailed deer to give birth to twins than it is for her to produce a single fawn. (The twins are typically fraternal, not identical.) But about 25 per cent of the time, the fawns are actually half-siblings. The "twins" have different baby daddies. There's also been at least one documented case of "triple paternity": researchers in Alabama reported triplets sired by three different bucks. Whoa. That's some southern hospitality!—JACKIE DAVIS

REPORTER

CANOE MOVE, FISH GONE WILD & FOCA THUMBS UP

BIG NEWS

If you were hoping to visit the Canadian Canoe Museum's newly built digs this spring, you're out of luck. Earlier this year, the museum announced that the opening of the facility at Little Lake in Peterborough, Ont., would be delayed until late summer or early fall. Construction began on the $40 million building in 2021. But Covid-related material shortages, including a lack of cement powder, pushed the expected date of completion back. The new facility—large enough to display the museum's entire collection of more than 600 watercraft and 500 paddles—will be 65,000 sq. ft. (So they really need that cement powder.)

HERE FISHY, FISHY

What kind of goldfish lives in B.C., is the size of a football, and can reproduce three times a year by cloning itself? If you said, "the fictional kind," you'd be wrong. Illegally released pet goldfish have become a serious problem in the province's waterways. In a fishbowl, goldfish stay tiny. In the wild, they can grow to be 40 cm long and live for 40 years under the right conditions. They compete with native fish for food and space and carry parasites and diseases that can spread to other fish, Brian Heise, an associate professor at Thompson Rivers University, told the CBC in March. And they can proliferate so efficiently because females "don't even need a male to reproduce." (They do this through gynogenesis, a form of asexual reproduction where the eggs aren't actually fertilized, and all the genetic material comes from the female.) The takeaway? If you don't want your pet goldfish, rehome it. Or just wait a while. The average goldfish only lives for two to three years.

LOOKIN' OUT FOR THE LOONS

Way to go, Wolfe Lakers. In March, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations announced the winner of its 2022 Achievement Award: the Wolfe Lake Association. FOCA praised the cottager group's Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program. (So did we: "They're Tackling It As a Team," Waterfront, Oct '22.) The program is a voluntary initiative that encourages anglers to trade in their lead tackle—which is toxic to loons and other wildlife—for a $10 voucher towards replacement lead-free tackle. By the end of 2022, the lake association had collected more than 100 pounds of lead. "Your creativity and dedication to protecting Wolfe Lake is a model for other organizations to look up to!" FOCA posted on its Facebook page. "Keep up the great work!" Ditto.

KAYLA CUDDY

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BUY THE WAY

To your credit

The search

Marcia Ruby and Tom Howard always hoped they'd get back to the Maritimes. Tom's from Saint John, N.B., and for more than 30 years, the Kitchener, Ont.-based couple would travel east with their two daughters to visit family. "But when the grandparents passed, we had no easy place to go," says Marcia. "Our hearts were there, but our wallets weren't."

So when Tom's sister sent them the listing for a cottage on P.E.I. in May of 2021, their first instinct was to shrug it off. "But when we looked at the place, we just saw ourselves there," says Marcia.

What they got

It was a modest, two-bedroom, 621 sq. ft.-bungalow listed for $199,900, across the street from the ocean in Fernwood, just 20 minutes from Summerside on the Northumberland Strait—a spot known for the Seacow Head Lighthouse from the 1985 *Anne of Green Gables* movie. They hadn't been looking to buy anything, but they still had some bank credit available from when they'd downsized from their house in Kitchener to a condo nearby a dozen years ago. "A light went off. We could use the home equity line of credit we'd established when we bought our condo," says Marcia. (A home equity line of credit is a revolving line of credit that allows you to borrow against the equity you've already accrued in a property.) Their fixed interest rate was decent at 1.8 per cent, so it was beginning to look like the perfect time.

Within a few hours, they'd found a local realtor and put in an offer of just over $200,000. By the next morning, the place was theirs.

The silver lining

The cottage is just what they'd hoped it would be: their daughters—now 34 and 39—host friends in the spring, and the couple spends their summers there. Of course, there's always a hiccup: the septic tank couldn't be repaired. The family switched to a holding tank that filled up faster than they realized. To offset pressure on the tank, daughter Amelia immediately got to work building an outdoor shower, which they love even more than the indoor setup.

"It just made sense financially for us to buy this way," says Marcia. "And we're pretty happy to have the means for our family to stay rooted in the Maritimes."

—ANICKA QUIN

INTERESTED IN BUYING, SELLING, RENTING, OR DREAMING ABOUT COTTAGE REAL ESTATE?
Subscribe to our newsletter The Key at *cottagelife.com/thekey*

Line-of-credit know-how

Before you use a home equity line of credit to purchase a cottage, accredited financial counsellor Max Mitchell has tips.

BE CAREFUL ABOUT INTEREST RATES—ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE ON A VARIABLE MORTGAGE

"In a previous interest-rate environment, a HELOC would be a lot more appealing or much lower risk than it is today, when interest rates are much higher," says Mitchell, who's based in Vancouver. Marcia and Tom have a low, fixed interest rate, and are currently paying down their principal as quickly as they can, before their mortgage and HELOC renews in a few years—likely at a higher rate.

RESEARCH THE APPRECIATION POTENTIAL OF PROPERTY IN THE REGION

"Anytime you're using debt to purchase an investment, you should make a very educated guess to make sure your return is going to be higher than what you're risking," says Mitchell. "That doesn't mean asking your realtor, who's incentivized to make a sale." In other words: do your own research.

BE PREPARED FOR FUTURE CASH-FLOW CRUNCHES

"If something comes around a year from now—such as having to pay for your kid's wedding—you can't sell the toilet from the cottage, you can't sell the porch," says Mitchell. "You have an incredibly illiquid piece of property." Also, if renting out the cottage is part of your cost-covering plan, consider if you can still make the monthly payments if a flood, fire, or other event makes the place unrentable: "If everything goes sideways, how will you be impacted?"

COURTESY MARCIA RUBY

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ADAM HOLMAN

A little extra help

You can give newly hatched turtlets a boost with this super-simple project. ››

31 Top marks for legible rulers and clean joints.

32 Not all of the yokes in this magazine are terrible puns.

32 Understanding the corrosive relationships in your cottage.

34 Hey sailor, looking for a good repair? Just peel and stick!

SOLUTIONS

Turtles, turtles, rah rah rah

SOUTHERN ONTARIO IS the turtle capital of Canada, home to seven at-risk species. Between April and October, male and female turtles are on the move, and cottagers will often spot the females during nesting season in June. All of Canada's freshwater turtles are semi-aquatic, travelling both on land and in the water.

Female turtles cover great distances for the perfect spot to dig a nest and lay their eggs. "They often go back to the nesting site they've used for years. Some snapping turtles have been tracked for tens of kilometres," says veterinarian Sue Carstairs, the executive and medical director at the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre in Peterborough, Ont.

Turtles, she explains, are very picky mothers. They look for a sandy or gravelly nesting spot, out in the open—somewhere that's not going to flood and that's not too hot or too cold. They won't nest in heavily vegetated areas. "It's easy to tell when a turtle is nesting because they'll hang around for hours and you'll see them digging. At that point, it's best to leave them alone," says Carstairs.

After digging, the female turtle deposits her eggs, covers them up, and leaves. The hatchlings will later fend for themselves. Because these eggs can be dug up and eaten by predators, very few of them survive to hatch. Cottagers can boost these odds by building a nest protector for turtles on their property, says Carstairs—and a protector can help any of our freshwater species. While it's illegal to disturb or interfere with a natural nest, Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry allows cottage owners to set up nest protection on their property.

The OTCC sells nest protectors, but making your own is simple: build a two-foot square frame using untreated 2x4 lumber. Staple half-inch galvanized hardware cloth on top.

Make an escape route for the hatchlings by cutting 2"-by-1" notches in each side, on the bottom edge.

When you spot a nesting turtle, mark the location after giving the mother time to finish laying her eggs. Once she leaves, place the protector over the nest and stake the four corners of the frame into the ground. Use spikes at least 8" long, says Carstairs, to help stop raccoons from getting at the nest. Check that the exit holes and the top of the nest protector are clear of vegetation so sun and rain can get through, and the hatchlings can later easily leave the nest.

"The sex of the babies is determined by the temperature, so we don't interfere with that; let nature do its thing," says Carstairs.

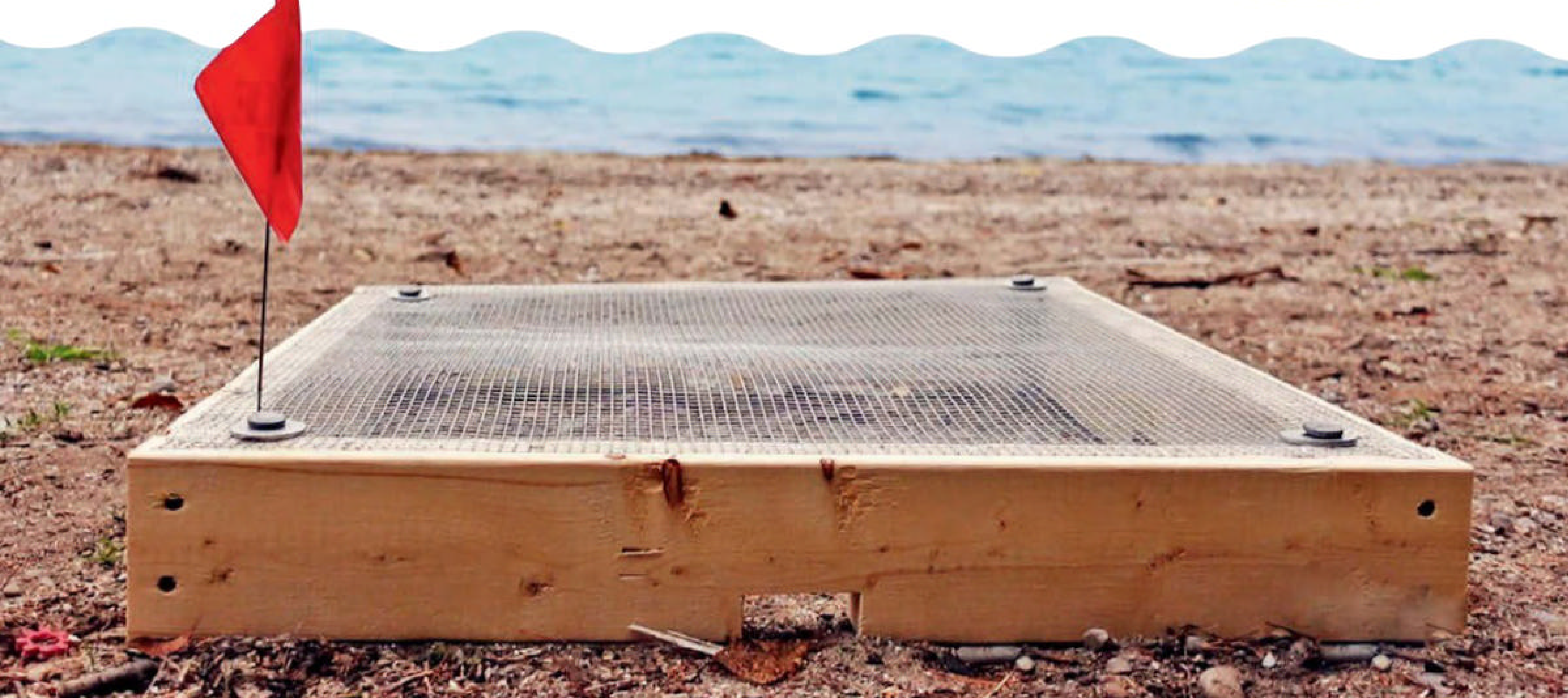
"People get worried if they haven't seen any babies hatch or come out, so they dig up the nest. That's a big mistake because many species over-winter in the nest: they'll hatch and then not emerge until the spring, so it's important to leave the nest box on until late fall," she says.

Having a nest protector on your property is a fun, easy way for wildlife lovers to help animals at risk, says Carstairs.

"Protecting turtles is so beneficial to us. They've been around so long that we can learn from their physiology. They're also a huge part of our wetlands system—where our drinking water comes from. We want the biodiversity to remain healthy, so our water source remains healthy."

—WENDY HELFENBAUM

Our Cottage Coach built one too!
cottagelife.com/nest-protector



REAL TOOL

CAN'T READ YOUR METAL RULER?

Brighten up the markings by applying correction fluid (or a thin coat of white paint), then lightly sanding.

KNOW-HOW

Squeeze play

WHETHER YOU'RE EDGE-GLUING two boards together, attaching solid wood strips to a raw plywood edge, or gluing joints, a bit of glue squeeze-out is a sign that you've applied enough glue to the connection. But when glue penetrates the wood grain next to the seam, it can create finishing problems. It's much easier to prevent the glue from taking hold, rather than to try to fix the finish after you've applied it.

It's hard to avoid squeeze-out entirely, so many strategies require removing a tiny bit of the wood adjacent to the glue line. But don't wipe the glue while it's fresh and wet—that tends to force it into the wood pores, making the problem worse. Instead, wait until the glue is the consistency of putty; then you can easily slice almost all of it from the surface using a chisel.

To remove any remaining glue, after it's dried fully, the best tool is a card scraper (or cabinet scraper). A card scraper is a thin, often rectangular, sheet of metal with a sharp edge. Drawing it back along the wood surface cuts cleanly to remove a fine layer of wood. Sandpaper works too, but it can clog pores with a mix of wood and glue dust.

If you're using open-grained wood, such as oak, or staining your project, any residual glue will make your finish blotchy. One strategy is to pre-stain the pieces, so the glue doesn't penetrate raw wood. You can also mask the joint edges with tape, being sure to press the tape down firmly so glue can't get underneath. A coat of sanding sealer—a clear base coat that improves subsequent finish coats—on the parts ahead of gluing will also keep them clean.

—SEAN LEDOUX

STUFF WE LIKE

Tough as nails

IF YOU'VE HIT a nail or a screw with your circular saw, you know how fast this can ruin the blade. All it takes is a second or two and you'll have broken, dull, and missing teeth.

The NailSlicer Framing blade is one of a new breed of metal-tough saw blades for wood that can plow through embedded metal hardware with few problems. The carbide teeth on the NailSlicer chew through nails and screws almost like they weren't there. Of course, you should avoid hitting metal if you can—the blade will last even longer.

I used the 7¼"-diameter blade for my tests (it also comes in 6½"), sawing a piece of ¾" pine lumber with screws driven into the edge every few inches. This blade is good value too. At $15 or less, you won't find many blades cheaper than this and, if you do, you'd never want to hit metal with them.—STEVE MAXWELL

NAILSLICER
FRAMING
CRESCENT TOOLS
7¼"
184mm
24T
CARBIDE TEETH
DIENTES DE CARBURO
DENTS EN CARBURE

THIS PAGE: TOP, LIAM MOGAN. OPPOSITE: TURTLE, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/GREGORY JOHNSTON; NEST PROTECTOR, ADAM HOLMAN

SATURDAY PROJECT

Over-the-shoulder holder

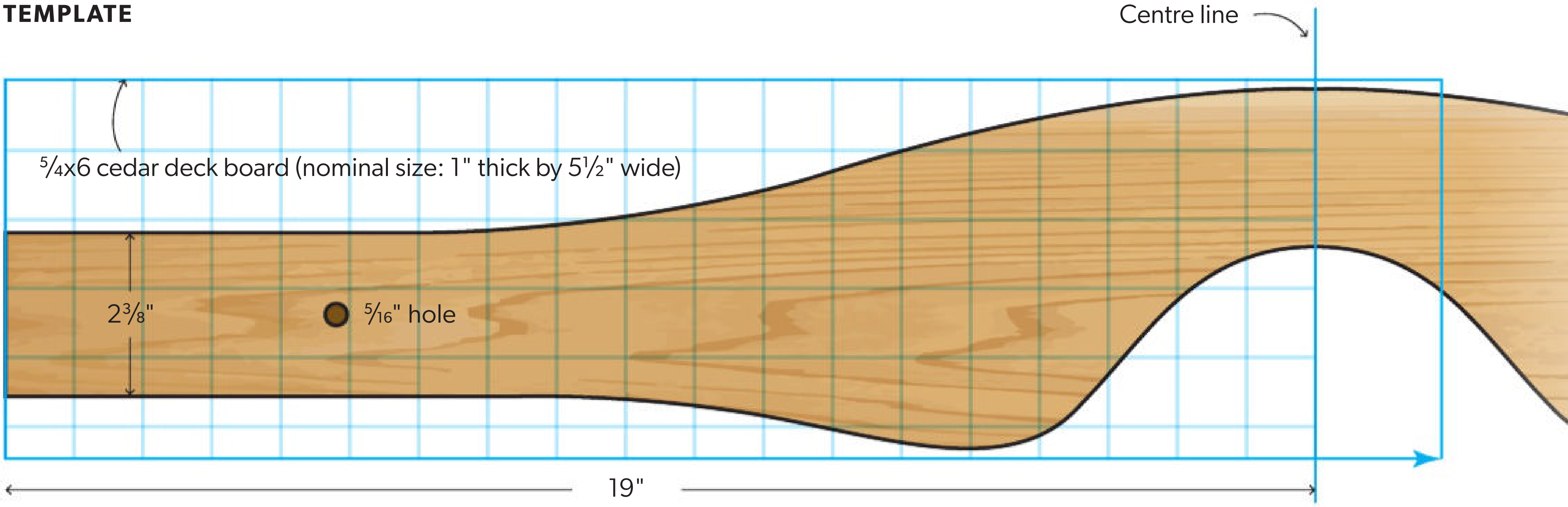
WE'VE GOT A couple of canoes at the cottage: one is a breeze to haul, but the other is a pain in the neck—literally. The easy one has a yoke—wood that spans the canoe and has a semicircle cut-out, allowing it to sit comfortably on my shoulders without crunching my neck. Having come across removable yokes during my online travels, I decided to build one for the other canoe. Removable is important here. I didn't want to replace the existing middle thwart because the fasteners—concealed under a one-piece cap that protects them from the elements—would be hard to reinstall. Boring unnecessary extra holes in the gunwales is not a good idea, and an additional fixed cross-piece limits the usable space.

Most removable yokes clamp onto the gunwales with custom-shaped metal pieces, star-shaped knobs, and bolts. The hardware is similar to the hold-down clamps I use in my workshop—and once I made that connection, a simpler yoke design became apparent.

I purchased two aluminum O'Skool hold-down clamps on Amazon and picked up a cedar 5⁄4x6 deck board at the lumber yard. "Clear" or "Select" cedar is best for this project because there are no knots—but it's pricey. Picking through the cheaper knotty stuff will likely yield a 36" section of clear, straight-grained cedar. Cedar is fine for a lightweight canoe like my fibreglass one; for a heavier canoe, ash or cherry is traditional.

I used the yoke from my other canoe to make the pattern for the new one, adjusting the length to extend just beyond the gunwales. Trace the pattern for the yoke onto the cedar blank. Cut out the yoke using a jig saw fitted with a fine-toothed wood blade. Round all the sharp edges on both sides using a router and a half-inch roundover bit. You can also ease the edges by hand with a wood rasp, sandpaper—and patience.

TEMPLATE

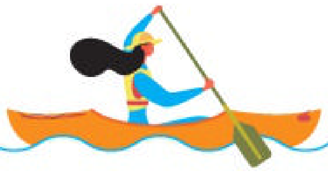


MATERIALS

Rules of the corrode

WHEN TWO DIFFERENT metals are in contact with an electrically conductive liquid, one metal often corrodes faster than it would were it alone in the liquid. At the same time, the other metal corrodes more slowly than usual.

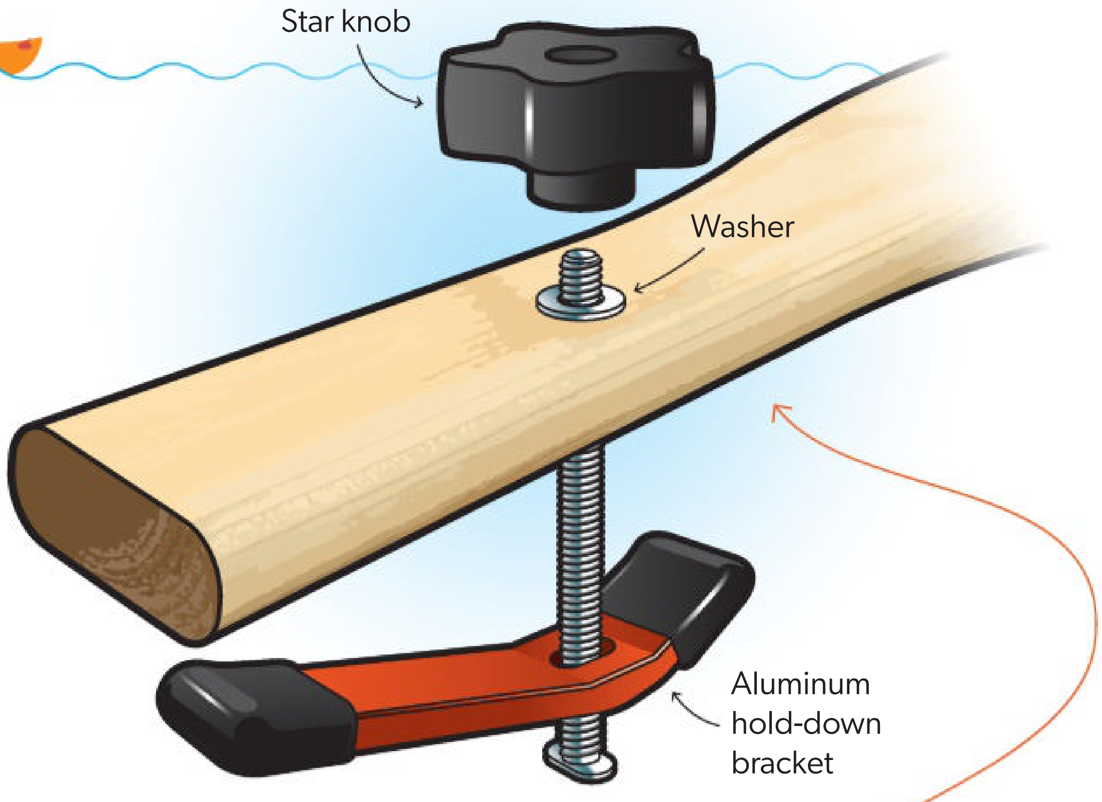
Sometimes this reaction—galvanic corrosion—is useful, and sometimes it causes problems. Your cottage deck is a good example: ordinary steel or aluminum hardware degrades quickly in a pressure-treated wood deck. The wood, treated with copper,

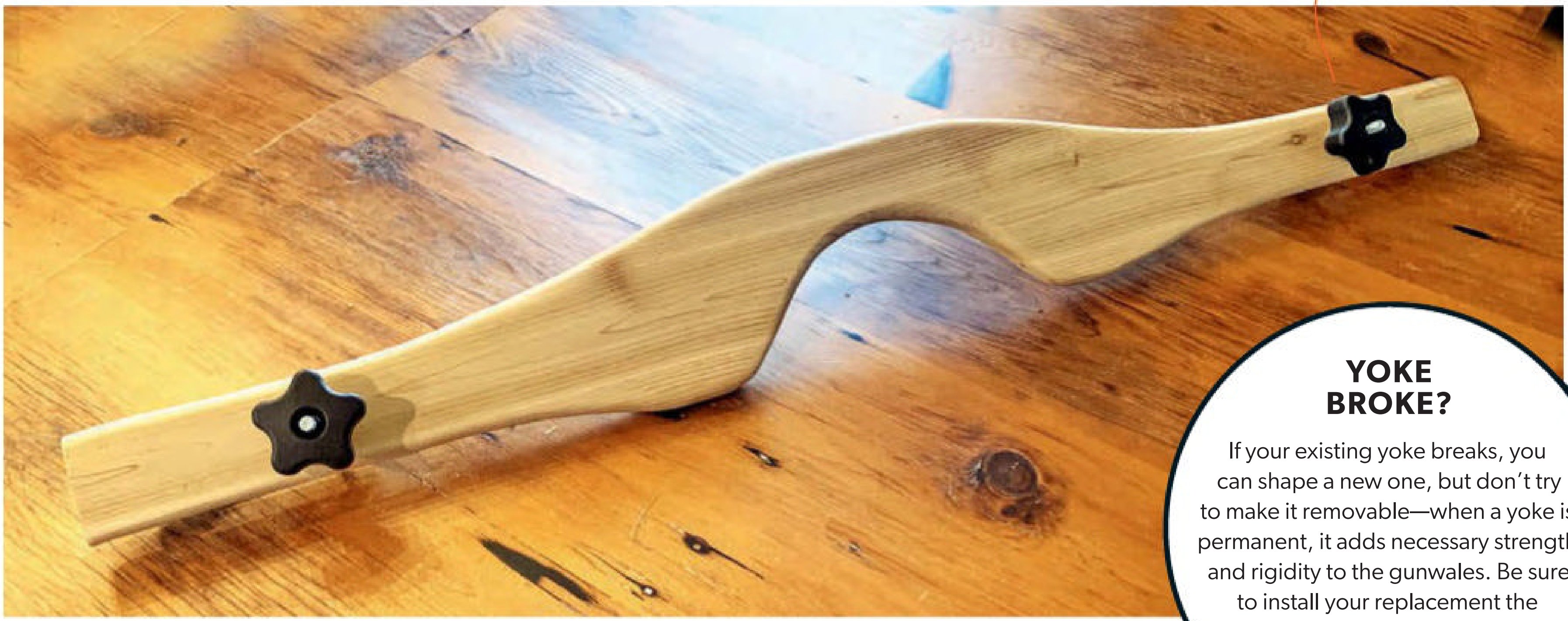


The position of the hold-down clamps is determined by the interior width of your canoe. In my case, I needed 36" to the ends of the clamps. Mark and bore 5⁄16" holes in the cedar for the bolts. The clamps have some wiggle room, since the bolts go through slots, not holes, in the aluminum.

Finally, sand the yoke with 120-grit sandpaper and finish with a few coats of spar varnish to keep the weather out and enhance the grain.

When it's time to start your portage, position the yoke as close to the middle of the canoe as possible and tighten down the clamps.—PAUL LEWIS





YOKE BROKE?

If your existing yoke breaks, you can shape a new one, but don't try to make it removable—when a yoke is permanent, it adds necessary strength and rigidity to the gunwales. Be sure to install your replacement the same way the old one was so the structure isn't compromised.

THIS PAGE, PHOTO: PAUL LEWIS. ILLUSTRATION: CANOE, YOKUNEN - STOCK.ADOBE.COM; YOKE: PAUL LEWIS.
OPPOSITE, ILLUSTRATION: PAUL LEWIS. BATTERY PHOTO: YOKI5270 - STOCK.ADOBE.COM; LASAGNA PHOTO: SMUAY - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

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has enough water in it to create galvanic corrosion with steel or, especially, aluminum. Hot-dipped galvanized fasteners are safe in PT lumber—in part because the zinc coating corrodes preferentially to steel.

If you've ever baked lasagna in a steel pan covered with aluminum foil, you may have noticed small holes in the foil, especially after storing leftovers in the fridge. You've built a lasagna battery and shown how fast galvanic corrosion can occur.

It's not all bad. The same reaction protects your water heater: the sacrificial anode rod inside it corrodes first, so the metal tank doesn't. The best way to prevent galvanic corrosion where you don't want it is to avoid creating the conditions that encourage it. Support steel and copper pipes with straps of the same metal, and use special dielectric fittings—which break any electrical connection—whenever you need to join pipes of different metals.—MARTIN ZIBAUER

JOB JAR

The cut in your jib

A SMALL HOLE or tear in your windsurfer or dinghy sail can often be temporarily repaired with a peel-and-stick patch—no need for a heavy-duty sewing machine. It's a quick fix (if you have the right materials) and will prevent further damage until you can get your sails to a pro for permanent repair.

I always keep some adhesive-backed sail repair tape on hand for emergencies. It comes in various widths, weights, and fabrics, including Dacron, ripstop nylon, and laminate (try to match your sail material). Sailrite, a sailmaking supplier, has a wide selection of repair tapes available online—be sure to buy the adhesive-backed kind.

Most short tears, less than a foot or so, are simple to temporarily patch with sail repair tape. One exception is a rip in a high-load area, near the leech (the back edge) of a mainsail or jib—a tear there may require additional reinforcement.

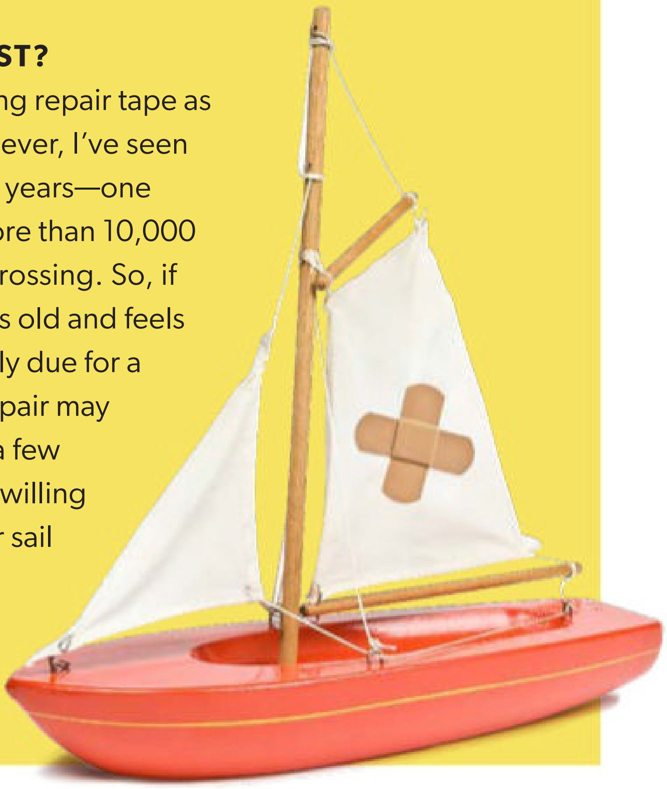
HOW TO MAKE IT STICK

1. Wipe the damaged surface to remove any dirt or salt, and allow it to dry.
2. Cut the sail repair tape into a patch that overlaps the tear by about one inch all around.
3. Apply the patch: start on one side and work your way to the other, peeling off the tape backing as you go. Work out any areas of creasing or bubbling.
4. Vigorously rub the surface of the patch, pressing it down and paying particular attention to the tape's edges or anywhere it crosses a seam.
5. One patch should be enough for most ripstop nylon repairs. But for Dacron sails, repeat the process on the other side, so the tear is sandwiched between two patches.

HOW LONG CAN IT LAST?

Sailmakers recommend using repair tape as a temporary measure. However, I've seen Dacron tape repairs last for years—one patch I applied survived more than 10,000 nautical miles on a Pacific crossing. So, if your dinghy's sail is 20 years old and feels like a T-shirt, you're probably due for a replacement—but a tape repair may extend its operable life by a few more seasons. If you're not willing to risk a blow-out, take your sail to a sailmaker at the end of the summer and have it properly patched up.

—FIONA MCGLYNN



STUFF WE LIKE

GO PAPER LESS

SEPTIC SYSTEMS REQUIRE care to work properly and safeguard the environment, which is especially important for waterfront cottage owners. Many of us spell out, in cute signs next to the toilet, exactly what can go into that system, but it's harder to control how much toilet paper people use—and less paper, says Rick Touzin at Sound Septic Service in McKellar, Ont., is definitely better. As our family expanded, with in-laws and four grandaughters, our TP consumption went up, so I've been looking for a way to encourage everyone to use less.

I associate stand-alone bidets with European luxury hotels, but there's a good reason to consider a version of a bidet for your humble cottage. Bidet attachments fit under your existing toilet seat and save paper by washing your bits with a squirt of water from below. Installation is an easy, 20-minute job. Most are held in place by the same bolts that secure the toilet seat, and the plumbing is straightforward. Just turn off the water supply to the toilet, drain the tank, disconnect the supply line, and reattach with the bidet's fitting in line. Fancier (and more expensive) models that warm the water require a GFCI-protected electrical outlet near the toilet.

I installed a Tushy Classic 3.0 bidet ($134.95, *hellotushy.com*) to see how well it works. The control panel has a dial to get just the right pressure and a toggle to adjust the angle of the jet. Like a separate bidet, it's very hygienic, but more importantly, it has indeed significantly reduced our paper consumption.—**WAYNE LENNOX**

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How old are my trees?

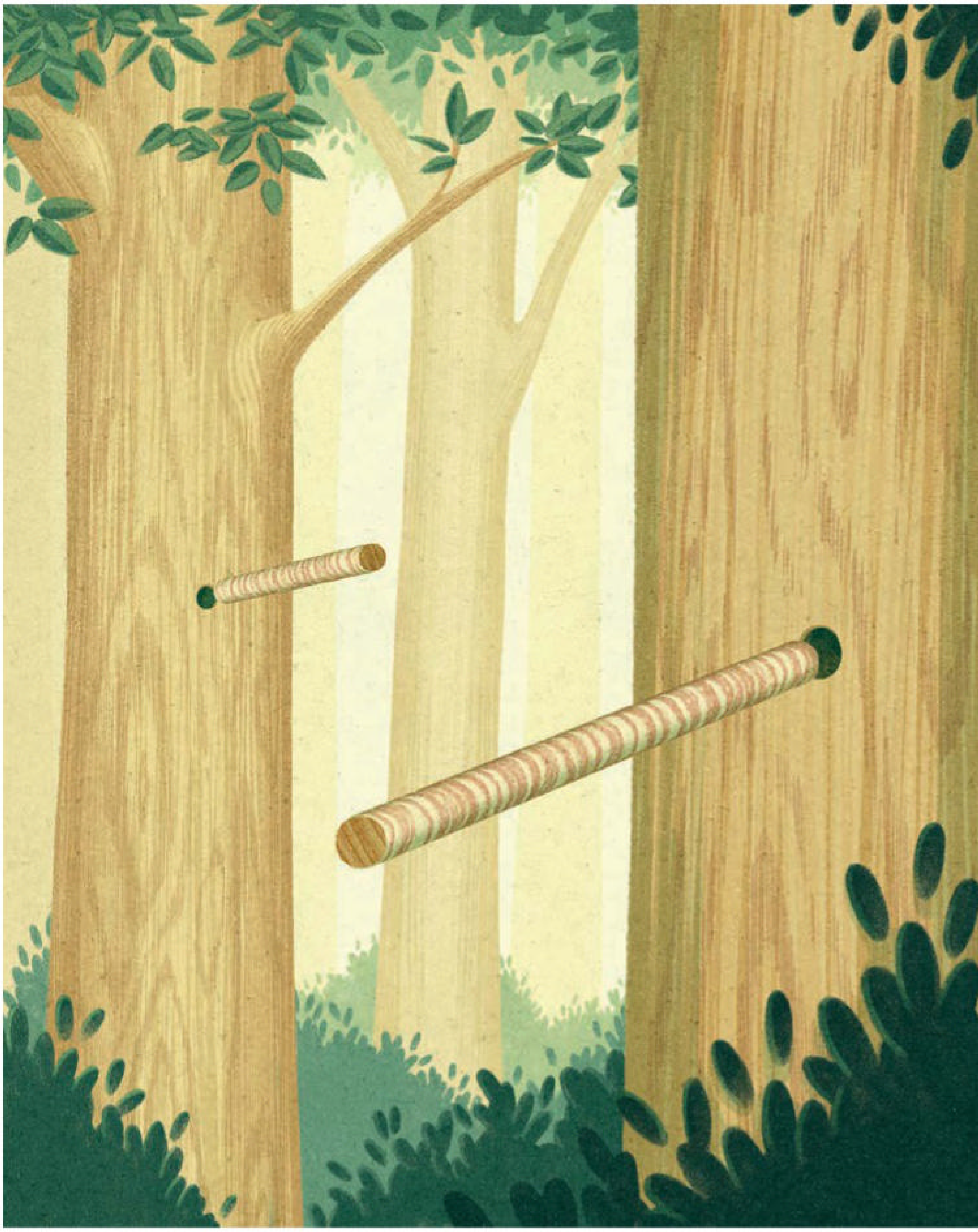
BY JACKIE DAVIS

Q: Is there some way, some formula, perhaps, to gauge the age of trees without cutting them down and counting the rings? *—Jeff Moore, French River, Ont.*

A: Yes, there is a formula, originally developed by the International Society of Arboriculture. It works because trees of the same species under the same conditions grow at roughly the same rate. Here's how you can use it: measure the circumference of the tree's trunk about 4.5 feet from the ground. Divide that by pi (3.14); this gives you the "diameter at breast height" (or the "DBH" in arborist lingo). You then multiply the DBH by the tree species' typical growth factor (you can find charts online). This is a number assigned to each species that corresponds to how fast it typically grows.

The problem with this formula? In Canada, what's typical varies widely. Different regions have different growing seasons, and "there are many factors that can influence a tree's size," says Steve Smith, an arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts in Calgary: soil conditions, root stress, water availability, or even light availability. "Trees that are in the understory of the forest often don't grow as much in diameter as trees in better growing conditions," says Smith. "I once had to cut down a spruce tree that was roughly 60 years old but only had a trunk diameter of about 15 cm." A healthy, 60-year-old spruce should be a thick tree. "Here in Alberta, I'd expect one to have a diameter of 60 to 80 cm."

So, the formula is just a rough estimate, and it can be pretty inaccurate. There's got to be a better way! There is—getting a tree core sample using an increment borer, says Peter Quinby, the chief scientist at Ancient Forest Exploration and Research in Powassan, Ont. "This is a tool used to extract a long, narrow, tube-shaped piece of the tree trunk—the bole—at 4.5 feet above the ground and perpendicular to the length of the trunk," he says. "The idea is to get this 'tree core' so that you can examine the growth rings extending from the outer-most ring to the inner-most ring."



MYRIAM WARES

Not that you'd want to start taking chunks out of your cottage trees—the process is intrusive and creates a wound, says Smith. "But it's much less intrusive than cutting the whole thing down."

Plants vs. septic tank

Q: Our sewage tank is made of fibreglass and is more than 30 years old. To this point, there have been no leaks, and we get it pumped out year-round. There's a growth of wild roses and raspberry plants over the tank. I pulled them out last fall; there were very large roots. Is there a danger of the roots penetrating the 1,000-gallon tank? Pretty scary as we'd have to replace an otherwise functioning tank.*—Larry Lee, Flanders Lake, Man.*

A: This would depend on how deep the tank is buried and whether the roots of the wild roses and raspberries could actually reach it. The first variable is knowable. But the second one?

"There is a lot of variation in terms of how different root systems behave," says Lorraine Johnson, the co-author of *A Garden for the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee* and other books on native plants. It can depend on factors such as the type of soil that they're growing in, for example. Still, "I'm not sure that I'd call the root systems of wild rose or wild raspberry particularly large—though it varies with the species," she says. "But I'd be surprised if the roots of a shrub could actually break through the fibreglass walls of an intact tank."

Roots are typically more of a concern with a leaching bed than with a septic tank, says Bill Goodale, a septic system inspector with Ontario's Township of Tiny. Roots can interfere with the pipes in the leaching field. But over time, it's possible that the roots could get through the lid or the seams of a tank, he says. Or, they could take advantage of weakened spots or breaches, adds Johnson.

If you want to err on the side of caution (and, since you're asking the question, you probably do) it's best to remove them, says Goodale.

A super-safe alternative groundcover would be a shallow-rooting, native grass mix, says Sara Heger, a researcher and instructor in the Onsite Sewage Treatment Program at the University of Minnesota. "We don't recommend *anything* with a woody stem or root be planted over the septic tank or drainfield."

A rental reality check

Q: I'm currently building a small cottage, which I intend to use as a short-term rental. How do you recommend treating any boats or watercraft associated with the rental? I have kayaks and a pedal boat that I will include, but I also have a pontoon boat that I would either consider renting separately or as an inclusion with the cottage at a slightly higher price. What is your advice? *—Jeff Thompson, via email*

A: Good call on including the kayaks and the pedal boat. Non-motorized craft are a big selling feature when it comes to cottage rentals, says J.T. Lowes with All-Season Cottage Rentals in Haliburton, Ont. "Especially when guests have a short list and are weighing the pros and cons of each. The cottages that offer non-motorized craft almost always get the booking."

Win! But when it comes to the pontoon boat, our advice—and Lowes's—is to think carefully about whether you want to offer it to your renters at all.

"Without exception, we advise our cottage owners not to include any motorized watercraft," he says. "Providing motorized watercraft really exposes you to liability. It's not a question of if someone will damage the boat, it's rather *when* it will get damaged."

Well, that's grim. But a large motorized boat *is* riskier, certainly in the eyes of an insurance company. So your first step is to check with your provider: for short-term rentals, many general cottage policies will cover "incidental" watercraft—canoes, kayaks, even small motorized craft—but exclude anything above a certain size or with an engine above a certain horsepower. This means you could need additional insurance to cover the use of the pontoon boat by your renters. And that could get expensive.

You'd also need to confirm that the person driving the boat has a boating license and give them all the details about fueling procedures and lake topography. For example, are there any hidden rocks or areas they should avoid? "And obviously, you'll want to take a sizeable damage deposit," says Lowes. "For all the extra work, extra costs, and increased exposure to liability, it's simply not worth it."

Hey, maybe you could put the time, effort, and money into getting more non-motorized boats. Who doesn't love a SUP?

Getting rid of the grackles

Q: We arrive at our island cottage in late May and are amazed at the grackles that boldly take up squatting rights. They build large grassy nests, lay eggs, and inhabit most of our rafter openings under our roof, on all sides of the cottage. I'm wondering if stringing rows of fishing line would deter them. My better half has moved many nests each spring with much care to suitable tree cradles. We are elderly now and cannot do this any longer. Any suggestions of workable options would be appreciated.*—Val Cabell, Georgian Bay, Ont.*

A: "Fishing line might work, but it would have to be spaced quite close," says Kerrie Wilcox of Birds Canada. And ideally, the strands of line would be strung horizontally and vertically, with one-inch "holes" at the largest, and pulled taut "so that the wire doesn't get tangled in the birds' feathers if they try to get through."

Our experts felt netting would be a better choice. Dan Frankian, the owner of Hawkeye Bird and Animal Control, based in Acton, Ont., suggests ¾"-by-¾" polyethylene. "Depending on how much you need to cover, it could only amount to a few hundred bucks, plus some stainless steel staples."

Other workable options? As is often the case with nuisance wildlife, exclusion is probably a better bet than putting your money on any other deterrent. "The list of what *could* work is almost endless, but the question is, what's going to work, and for how long," says Frankian.

As for moving the nests, you should know that the Migratory Birds Convention Act "prohibits people from moving nests of native species while the nest contains live eggs or live young," says Wilcox. "It's rare for a bird to continue using a nest that has been moved, even if it's just a few feet away. It's seen as some other bird's nest, even if it's got their own eggs in it." Moving the nest material is legal if there are no babies yet. But, as your better half surely knows by now, "people have to be diligent—sometimes going out every day or multiple times a day to remove that material."

All of this info comes with a caveat: it's possible that what you're identifying as grackles are actually European starlings. (It's easy to confuse the two.) "Starlings are known for nesting in and around the nooks and crannies of houses," says Wilcox. "Grackles tend to nest in trees, mainly conifers."

If this *is* a case of mistaken ID, since starlings are cavity nesters, they might be attracted to nest boxes placed away from the cottage. But that could backfire: you could end up attracting more European starlings to your property, plus give these non-native, common nuisance birds more opportunities to successfully reproduce. "That's not something we really want to encourage," says Wilcox.

Pre-nups and the cottage

Q: I'm getting married this year, and my fiancé and I have agreed to get a pre-nup. I haven't inherited my family cottage yet—but I will once my parents pass away. Is it possible to include a future asset as part of the agreement?*—Grace Mckee, Kawartha Lakes, Ont.*

A: Congrats on the impending marriedness! And the short answer is yes.

"A cottage or other inheritance can be excluded from family law claims by a domestic contract, provided it is specifically described and subject to all of the requirements of the Family Law Act, and provided that both parties understand the nature and consequences of the agreement," says Peg Galloway, a lawyer with Lillico Bazuk Galloway Halka in Peterborough, Ont. You don't *need* a lawyer to make a domestic contract (either a marriage contract or a cohabitation agreement—"pre-nup" isn't a proper legal term under the Act). But she'd recommend that you hire one to protect the integrity of the legal document. "Remember that any contract can be set aside by a court, so it's not simply the contract itself, but how the contract is completed that is important for protecting assets from future claims," says Galloway.

All of the above applies to inheriting a family cottage in Ontario. Provincial laws differ, so the same may not be true for a cottage in a different province.

But wait: there are recent changes to Ontario succession laws that could play into your pre-nup (*er*, marriage contract) planning. Flash forward to the future, when you've inherited the cottage and you and your spouse, who have kids, have recently separated. (*Aww*, we're sorry to hear that.) You have suddenly died. (We're *really* sorry to hear that.) These legal changes mean that—good news!—even if, pre-separation, you'd left the cottage to your now ex-spouse in your will, the cottage would pass to the kids. Your ex would be considered "predeceased," says Peter Lillico, also a lawyer with Lillico Bazuk Galloway Halka. Under the old rules, the will (which you didn't change, because you weren't expecting to die) would have held up. Your ex would get the cottage even if you didn't want them to anymore.

Talk to a lawyer before you make any decisions—estate planning is tricky. Oh, and we can help too! Sign up for our new newsletter series, Family Matters, and we'll walk you through the basics. Visit *cottagelife.com/newsletters.*

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Wetlands of Big Creek National Wildlife Area near Long Point Provincial Park, Lake Erie.

All creatures great and small

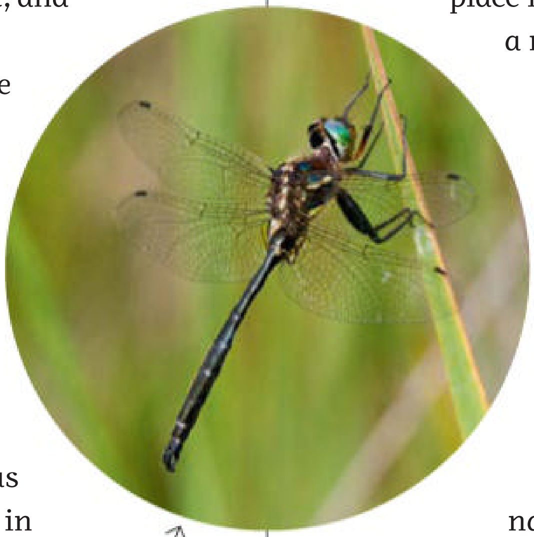
It's easy to love some wildlife. Others not so much. But love'em or hate'em, here's why protecting species will make for a bright future.

BY PETER SOROYE

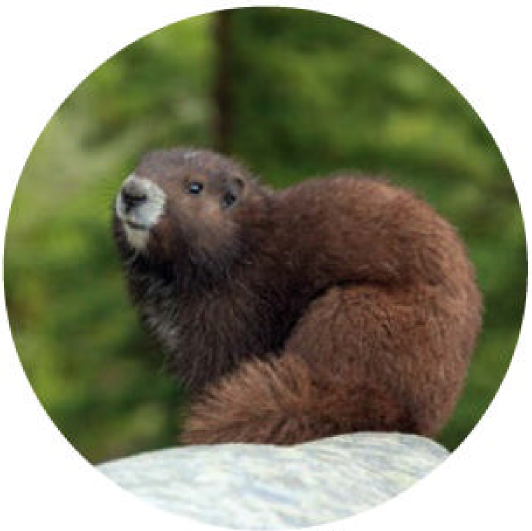
WETLAND, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ELENA BERD; DRAGONFLY, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DANITA DELIMONT

THE SWAMPS OF The Minesing Wetlands, a 15,000-acre area about 15 kilometres west of Barrie, Ont., are not the most immediately welcoming of places. Convincing someone to spend a day exploring the thick, forested marshes—with clouds of mosquitoes in the air and bloodsucking leeches in the water—isn't easy. I should know. I've been trying to convince friends to join me on a trip there for years. Again and again, my attempts are met with two questions: why would I visit, and why should I care?

Answering the first question is easy. Despite seeming unappealing, the Minesing Wetlands (sometimes called the "Everglades of the North"), are one of our country's most significant wetland systems. As a conservation biologist helping to map out some of Canada's most important places for nature, I'm excited to see some of the dozens of rare and endangered species that still call the Minesing Wetlands home. One species here has piqued my interest above all others—a jewel in this swampy rough. It's called Hine's emerald, a large dragonfly with a metallic green body and brilliant emerald eyes. It's an incredibly rare species; it requires a very specific type of wetland environment, and—unlike most dragonflies, which go from egg to adult in less than a year—the aquatic larvae of this species take three to five years to grow into adulthood, relying on crawfish burrows for shelter during winter and through any dry spells in summer. The Minesing Wetlands are the only place in Canada where this dragonfly is found, so as a nature lover, the slimmest chance to see this beautiful and unique piece of Canadian biodiversity is more than enough reason to visit.



Answering the second question—why should I care—takes longer to answer. I get asked similar things quite often: why care about this one rare species, no matter how beautiful it is? Why should I care about these wetlands or any other seemingly random place? Ultimately, it comes down to understanding why conservation and nature are important at all. Sure, nature is a nice-to-have, but is it really a must-have? ››



Why does biodiversity matter?

Most people are aware that across Canada and the world, we're losing more and more wild biodiversity every year. From looking at around 25,000 Canadian species that scientists have some basic understanding of (a fraction of the estimated 80,000 species in Canada), we know that about one in five species in Canada are imperilled to some degree.

These bits of Canadian biodiversity are significant internationally too. More than 300 species in Canada are found nowhere else in the world. From the adorable Vancouver Island marmot to Algonquin Provincial Park's Eastern wolf, the planetary survival of these species depends entirely on our conservation decisions here in Canada. When it's gone here, it's gone everywhere.

But, sometimes when I talk to landowners and land-users—farmers, cottagers, hunters, and ATV-ers—who hear me say we need to protect species or habitat, they get on the defensive. They don't want to be told how to use their land, or be limited in what they do on it because of some obscure plant or insect. They want to know what purpose these species serve, and if their function really outweighs the inconvenience, annoyance, or danger that these animals pose to us. They want to know, if it's gone, does it really matter?

The answer is, yes. Many of the natural processes that humans rely on depend on biodiverse ecosystems. Consider pollination, where a huge variety of wild bees, flies, and other insects—including mosquitoes—play a crucial role in ensuring the growth and yields of the fruits, veggies, and nuts that our diets rely on. Or consider decomposition, where species of ants, termites, mushrooms, worms, and more work together to break down and recycle dead plant and animal matter, clearing the way for new life. Gardeners will be familiar with these decomposers and detritivores as some of the main players in creating compost, but without them in the wild, we would quickly be buried under piles of dead plant and animal material. Species including rattlesnakes and black widow spiders and plants such as American ginseng might hold the cure to helping treat different diseases and conditions. Even those "annoying" species are fundamental pieces of biodiversity. Throughout their life cycle, mosquitoes help to move nutrients between aquatic and terrestrial systems. They also form a key link between phytoplankton and micro-organisms—favored prey of filter-feeding aquatic mosquito larvae—and larger animals, from bats to frogs, fish to birds. Mosquitoes are a central component of the food web in wetlands. Losing these pesky critters could compromise the function of the wetland, an ecosystem that helps us by filtering water, acting as a buffer to hold water and prevent destructive flooding during storms and winter thaws, and fighting climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere. These are ecosystem services that would be massively expensive to replace.

Having a variety of species participating in these functions matters as well. For example, pollination is more effective when done not just by a single species (such as honeybees), but instead by a diverse set of wild pollinators. And more biodiverse ecosystems may also be more resilient to change.

While many species might seem similar on the surface, we still lack so much understanding about the basic biology of most species and the complex interactions that they participate in within ecosystems. It's rarely clear what effect losing a species might have. To paraphrase biologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich, early pioneers in the fields of conservation biology and environmental advocacy, losing species in an ecosystem is like blindly popping rivets off a plane while it's flying. Some rivets might be redundant, and the plane can probably keep flying for a short while even with some structurally important rivets removed. But it's silly to risk popping off any rivets when you don't need to.

We have a big (but not impossible) task ahead of us to make sure that we keep all of our rivets on the metaphorical plane (or threads in the tapestry of life, if you prefer a less utilitarian analogy). Preventing further loss and recovering biodiversity to what it was—think of it as restoring rivets that have been damaged on a plane—goes together with addressing the climate crisis. The good news is that nations are taking steps towards this. Just this past December, 188 countries from across the world agreed to a new global framework for addressing biodiversity loss. While not perfect, the

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> "Losing species in an ecosystem is like blindly popping rivets off a plane while it's flying. Some rivets might be redundant, and the plane can probably keep flying for a short while even with some structurally important rivets removed. But it's silly to risk popping off any rivets when you don't need to"

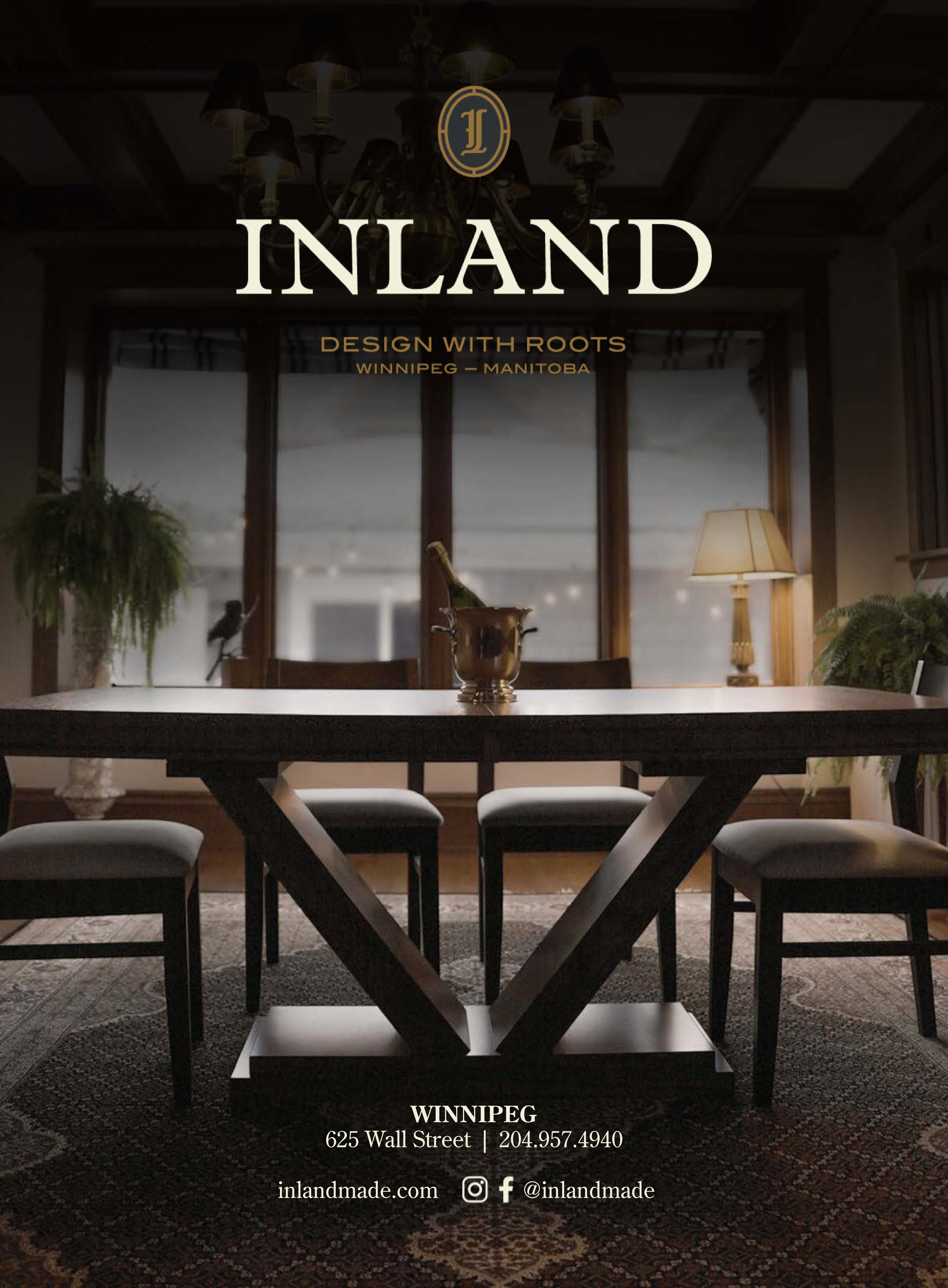
agreement contains some ambitious goals, including protecting 30 per cent of lands and waters by 2030, restoring and stopping the loss of areas important to biodiversity and of high ecological integrity, and addressing key drivers of biodiversity loss. Importantly, this agreement highlights the need for conservation to be led by (or at least happen in collaboration with) Indigenous peoples and local communities—something that is especially important here in Canada.

And it's not just at the Minesing Wetland. Wherever you are—at the side of a lake, on the banks of a river, on the edge of a field, or deep in the woods—there are many things that you can do to help biodiversity around you. It can start as simple as creating a pollinator garden of native wildflowers (or encouraging the wildflowers that are already growing), setting aside parts of lawn or lands to stay "wild" (such as by leaving leaf litter or wetlands alone for the year), or building and properly maintaining nest boxes for species such as bats or bees. Or you can participate in community science through apps such as iNaturalist or eBird. Local land trusts, conservation authorities, and nature groups can give you advice on the best actions to protect and steward lands you own and connect you to like-minded networks of people. Conservation doesn't need to be hard, and doesn't always need to be opposed to other ways of enjoying lands. By engaging with the conservation network and community around you, you can find new creative ways to take care of the land and appreciate nature.

Ultimately, stopping biodiversity loss requires action at both the local level and globally. As important as it is to protect and steward biodiversity near you, it's also important to vote for leaders who will take conservation seriously and work to meet global commitments.

I'm looking forward to my trip to the Minesing Wetlands in search of the Hine's emerald. I'll keep asking people to risk the marshes and mosquitoes to join me, and along the way, start down the path of appreciating biodiversity in all its forms. Like the gears in a watch, every bit of biodiversity—whether it's an emerald-eyed dragonfly, or a bloodsucking leech—plays some sort of role in the bigger picture and has intrinsic value of its very own. With hope and hard work—and an appreciation for the importance of all the pieces of our planet—I'm optimistic that creatures like Hine's emerald and other rare species will be a little less rare by the time I get a chance to see them.

Peter Soroye is the Key Biodiversity Areas assessment and outreach coordinator with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada. As you read this, he's likely on a hike that's taking 200 per cent longer than necessary as he stops to photograph every bug, bird, and flower he sees along the way.



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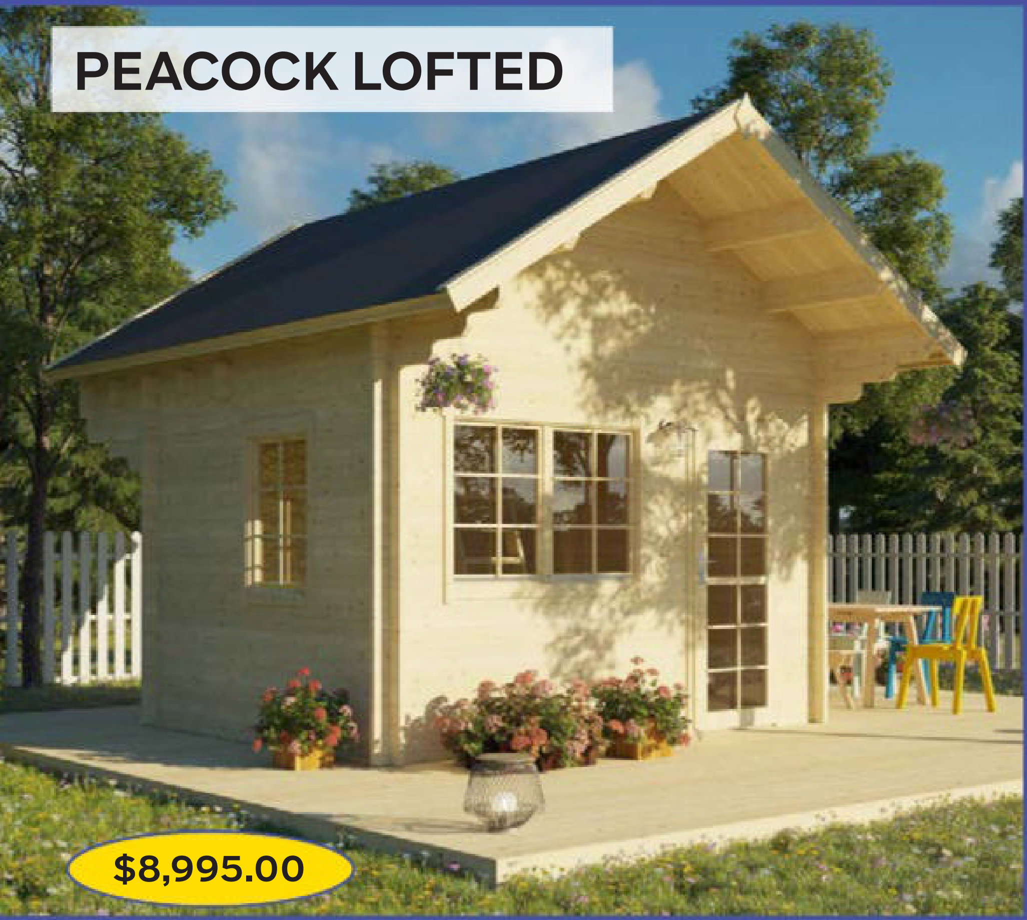

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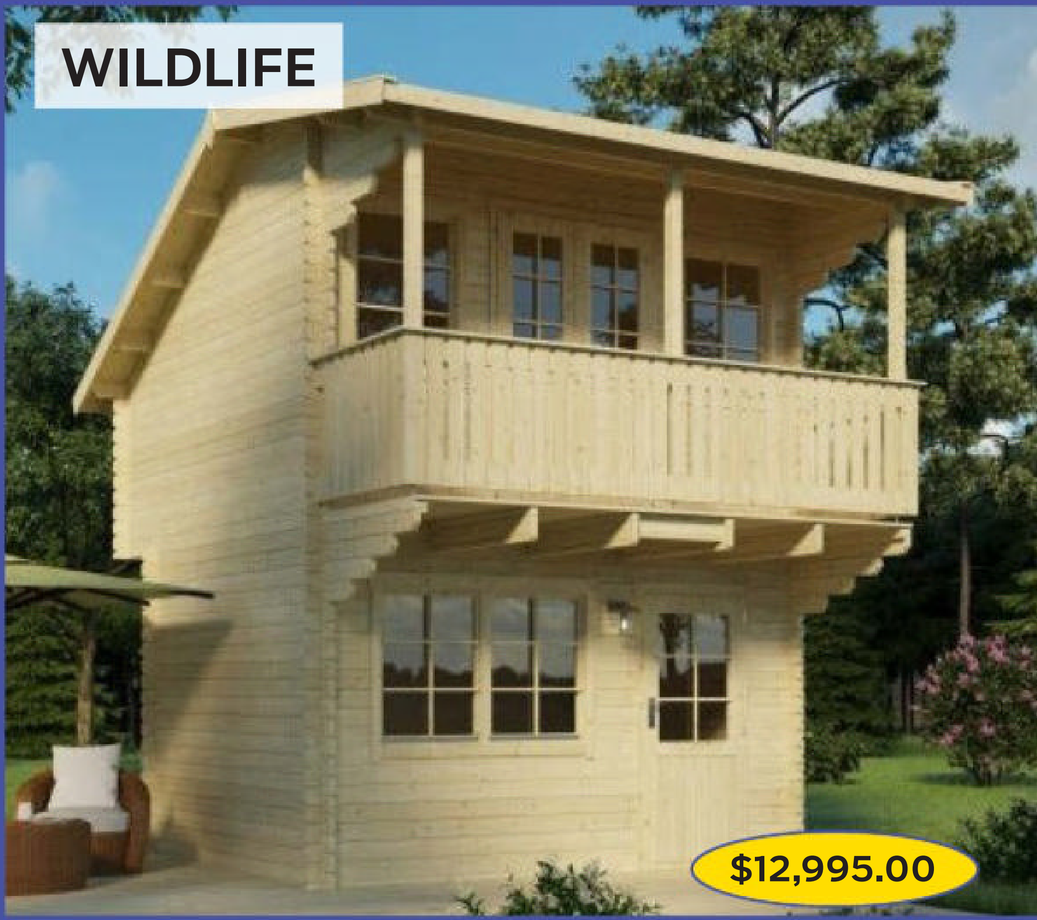

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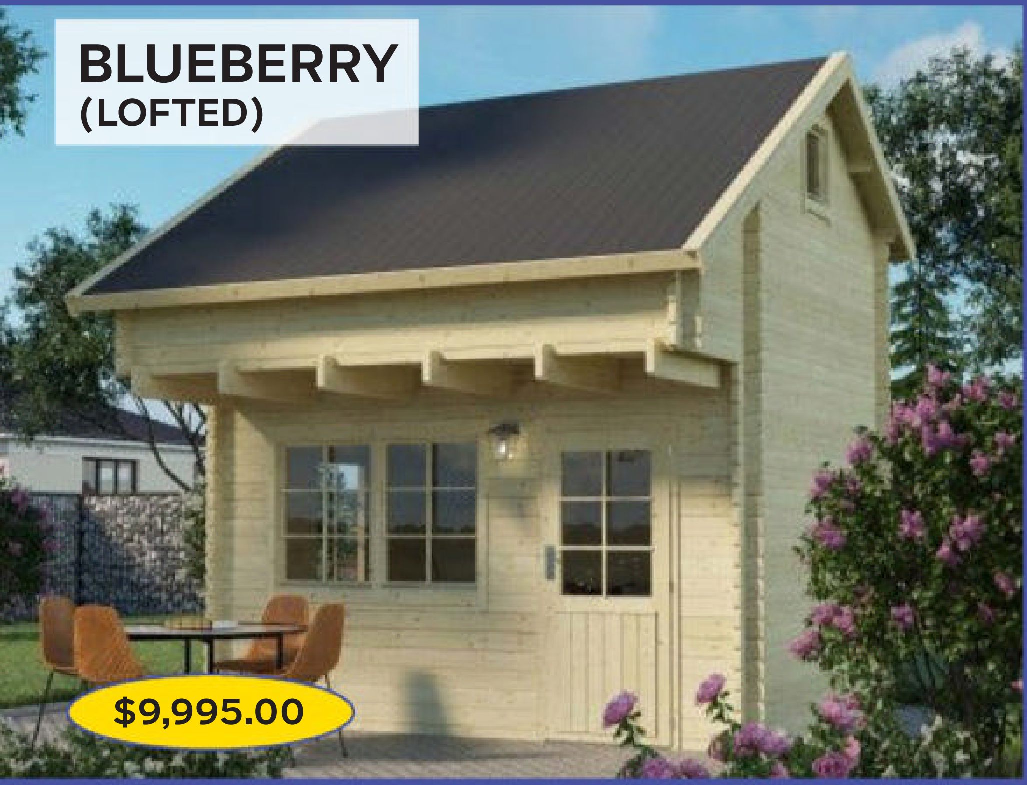

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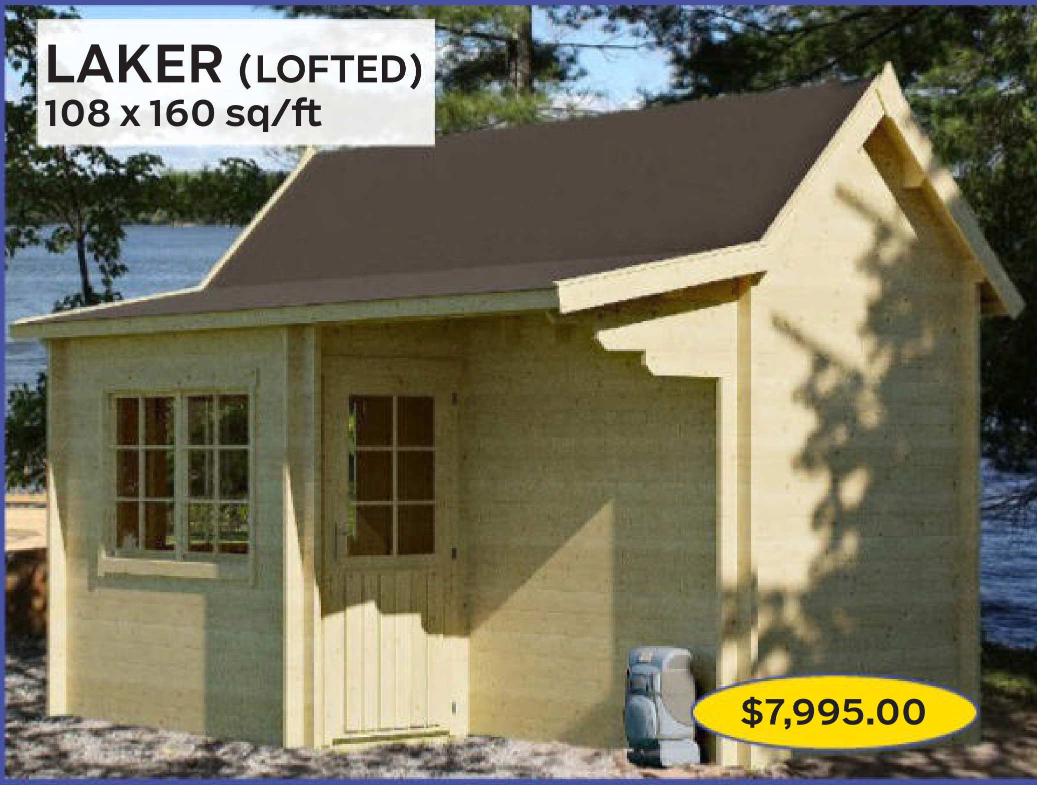

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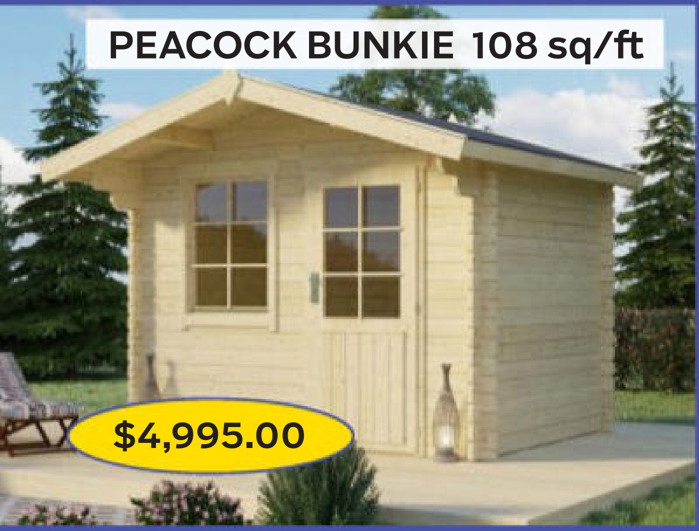

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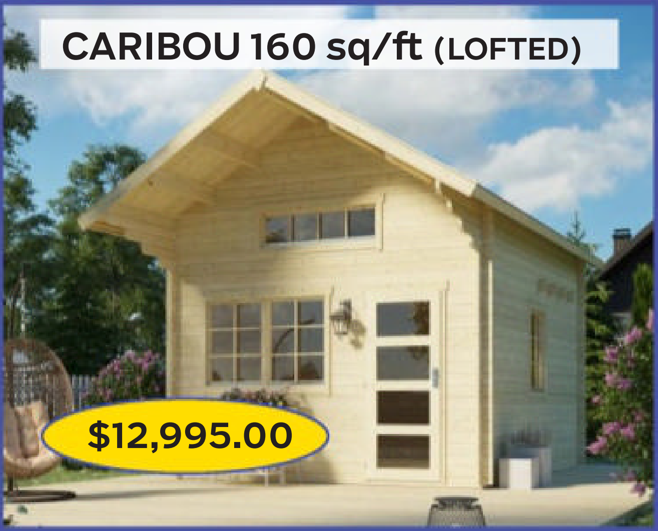

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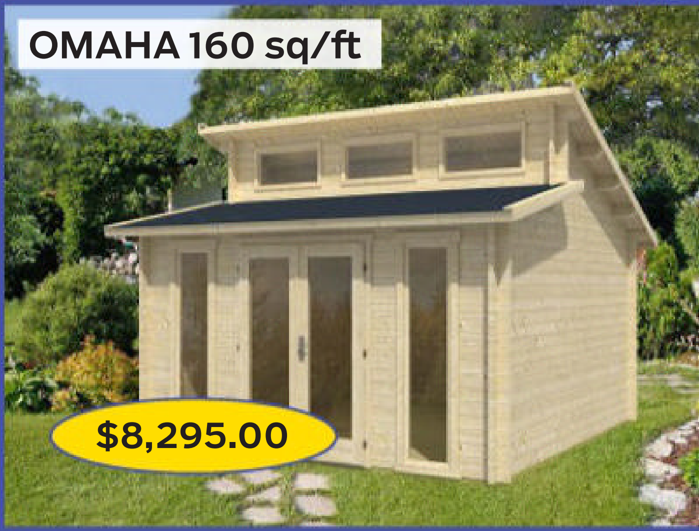

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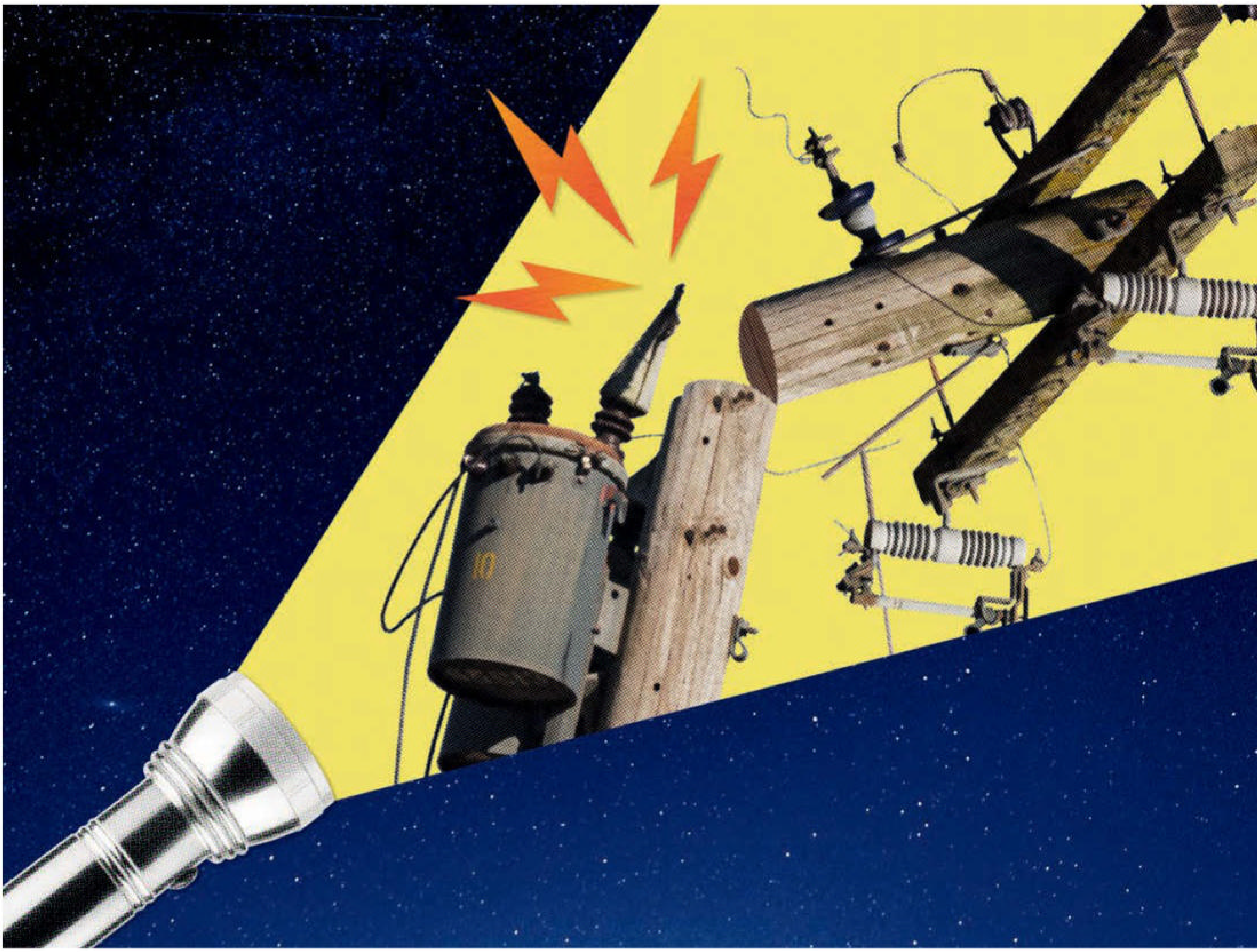

NATALIE FRANKE

Out of the dark

What *actually* happens when the lights go out at the lake? We debunk—or prove—six of our most-repeated power outage theories **BY LESLIE GARRETT**

AT LEAST A couple of times a summer at my sister-in-law Mary Kelly's cottage on Lake Muskoka, Ont., the power fails. The lights go out, the fridge and freezer go silent, and there are muttered prayers for fully charged cell phones and that the power will be restored before all the food—they're on an island, after all—spoils.

Mary checks first to see if it's just her cottage or if her neighbours are also experiencing an outage. She then calls Hydro One to report it. If there's been a major storm or the power has been out for a while, she'll hear helicopters. "I always hear them when there's a big outage," she says.

That's the thing with power outages. We're all too familiar with what's taking place in our cottages during a blackout—the rummaging for flashlights or candles, the expletives, perhaps a jolt of excitement injected into an otherwise humdrum day.

But most of us haven't a clue what's happening at the other end. What caused the outage? How long can we expect to be without power? Should we turn everything off? Are we imagining it, or does this seem to be happening more frequently? We asked the experts to shine a light on the common myths we tell ourselves while we're in the dark. ››

It's estimated that power outages in Canada cost $12 billion annually

1 RECENT POWER OUTAGES ARE CAUSED BY DEMAND ON THE GRID

Myth. Sure, lots more cottages have AC and big screens these days, but the same thing has been primarily causing power outages since the advent of, well, power. "Blame the trees," says Kendall Garry, a distribution line superintendent at Hydro One. Whether it's because of wind or ice and snow, trees topple and branches break to take down power lines. This is particularly true in cottage country, where mostly overhead conductors run through the tree canopy. Second to trees is motor vehicle accidents, she says. Sometimes the outage is due to equipment failure—in the winter, ice can build up on the equipment, for example—or less commonly, animals getting into equipment boxes. But greater stress on the grid isn't the culprit.

2 THERE ARE A LOT MORE POWER OUTAGES THAN THERE USED TO BE

Myth. Not more outages, just more awareness of outages, says Garry. Thanks to social media, we hear about every outage whether we're personally affected by it or not, leading to an overall impression that they're more common.

3 CLIMATE CHANGE WILL LEAD TO MORE POWER OUTAGES

True. "Climate change is causing increasingly severe and frequent storms and floods that are putting more communities and people at risk," says Anna Kanduth, a senior research associate at the Canadian Climate Institute. Power outages in Canada cost an estimated $12 billion annually, a cost she expects will increase along with extreme weather. What's more, as Canada transitions to renewable energy (people switching to electric vehicles, industrial plants converting away from fossil fuels), the Institute estimates that by 2050, the demand on the grid will be almost double.

Hydro One, along with other utility companies, is working hard to build reliability and resiliency into the grid, says Garry. That work includes replacing older utility poles; cutting down diseased trees near power lines; and replacing transformers and upgrading the infrastructure at transformer stations. When a harsh weather event beckons, "A lot of rigour and time goes into staffing for these events to make sure we can respond swiftly and efficiently," she says. "Everyone in the industry is looking towards how we can improve."

But Kanduth argues that it isn't happening quickly enough. "Unfortunately, the risks around us have changed, but our infrastructure and electricity systems have not—and we continue to build for yesterday's environment. We aren't building with materials that can withstand increasing temperatures and higher rainfall, for example." ››

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Why 72 hours?

Are you one of the one in three Canadians who have taken the Red Cross' advice to prepare for disaster? If so, you know that you should have three days' worth of supplies, including food, water, batteries; anything specific to your family, such as medication and pet food; and a portable radio. Why three days? Brandon Boyd at the Canadian Red Cross says that the "72-hour preparedness focus" was first launched in 2006. "The three-day window strikes a balance of being very useful in an emergency without appearing too overwhelming to the average person to prepare in advance." In other words, the Red Cross knows that most of us are lazy and unjustifiably confident that we'll be "just fine." For the keeners, says Boyd, "having supplies for longer than three days would be amazing, and I certainly encourage folks to assess their situation and prepare for as long as is feasible." —L.G.

4 THE POWER STAYS OUT LONGER IN RURAL AREAS THAN IN URBAN ONES

Myth. No truth to this one, though Garry admits it can be harder to access equipment in some off-road areas, which is why Mary Kelly sees and hears helicopters. "Hydro One has helicopters that we use in different ways," Garry says. "We'll use them to patrol, to move equipment, and to transport personnel." The helicopters are moving poles and equipment out to areas that aren't easily accessed by truck, snowmobile, or boat.

So what *does* happen when an outage is reported? Hydro One has automated devices on power lines that can section off part of a line to reduce the number of customers affected by an outage, and the devices can also help crews identify where the issue may be on the line.

Often, Hydro One first learns about an outage when someone reports it (so keep calling!). Crews are on call 24/7 so, once the outage is reported, they are dispatched to do a damage assessment. If possible, repairs are made right away. But if it's a larger issue, such as a location that's hard to reach, which requires specialized off-road equipment, or a problem at a station that requires a different team of experts, "we prioritize those outages, and we dispatch crews accordingly," Garry says. Workers are alerted to outages whatever the time and are told to report where they are needed, and crews can often be at the outage site in less than an hour from the time they are notified. There is a "restoration protocol," she says, "and a plan for communicating back to the customers when they can expect to see their power back on." The protocol is based on priority—responding to 911 emergencies or live lines that are down; then restoring power to emergency services, such as hospitals, fire and police stations, and water and sewage treatment facilities; then addressing the outage that would "do the greatest good for the greatest number," according to Hydro One; and then finally to whoever is left. Crews update the Ontario Grid Control Centre, which operates the province's power system, on their progress, and those updates are shared with customers through Hydro One's call centre, the outage map, on social media, and through text alerts.

5 IF YOU NEED THE TOILET, FILL A BUCKET WITH WATER FROM THE LAKE TO FLUSH

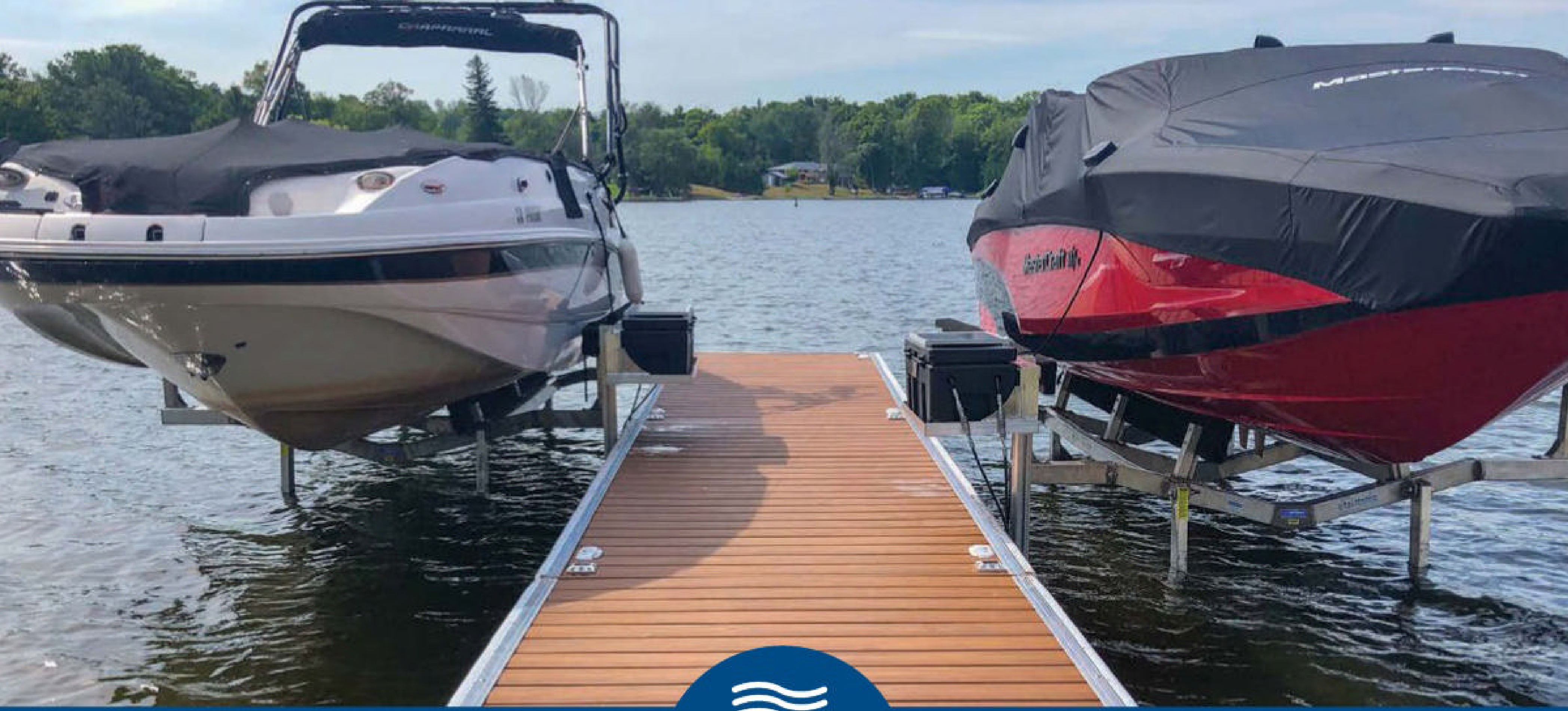
True (sort of). Sure, you can grab a bucket of lake water to flush your toilet during a power outage, says Rob Davis, the owner of EcoEthic in Sunderland, Ont. But that's only if there's no sewage pump connected to your system. "Many systems have a pump chamber, which the sewage flows into," Davis says. "Sewage is then pumped to the septic tank or from the septic tank pump pit to the leaching field." It's the pump, he explains, that won't work during a power outage, and while your system can hold a certain amount of sewage, whether it holds enough for continued use during an outage depends on the system—and the length of the outage. This is true for any water that goes down your drain: it all goes into the same system. At Davis's cottage on Kashawigamog Lake, Ont., the bucket method works dandy during outages because his system is gravity fed. The neighbours, however, have a pump, so they rely on Davis's loo to make deposits during an outage. Outhouse enthusiasts get the last laugh. No power? No matter!

6 OUTAGES CAN DAMAGE ELECTRONICS, ESPECIALLY HIGH-END ONES

True, potentially—though it's not the outage that does the damage, it's the restoration of power. The sudden spike in current and voltage can cause an "arc" that generates heat that can damage electronics and circuit boards. Even if the damage isn't immediately obvious, it can cause problems down the road with devices that eventually stop working short of their expected lifespan. They can be damaged if they're plugged in, even if they're not on. Brandon Boyd, the emergency operations manager for Eastern Ontario at the Canadian Red Cross, suggests turning off appliances, electrical equipment, and turning the thermostat down (if the heat was on) or up (if the AC was on) after the power goes out. Avoid any potential damage by plugging sensitive electronics into surge protectors.

Leslie Garrett divides her vacation time between her family cottage on Lake Huron and a summer home on Martha's Vineyard.

NATALIE FRANKE



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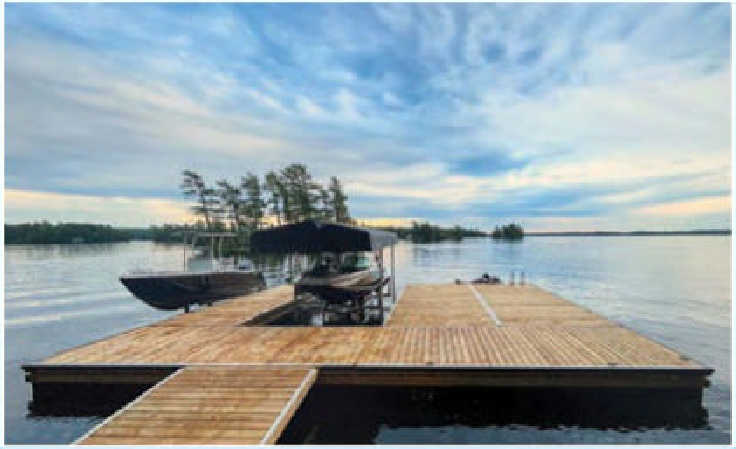

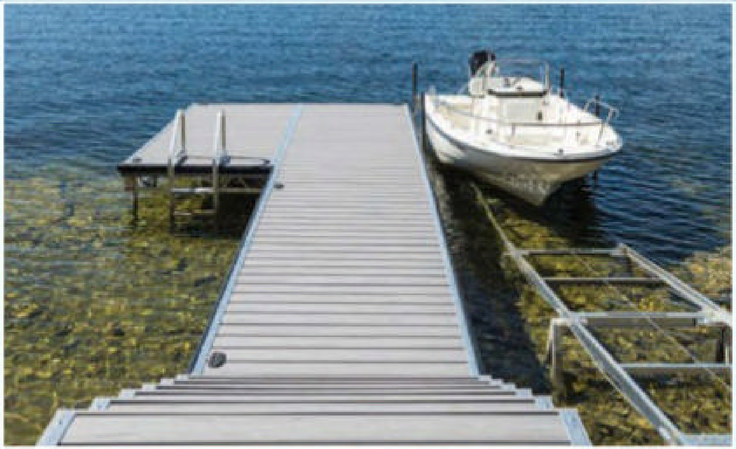

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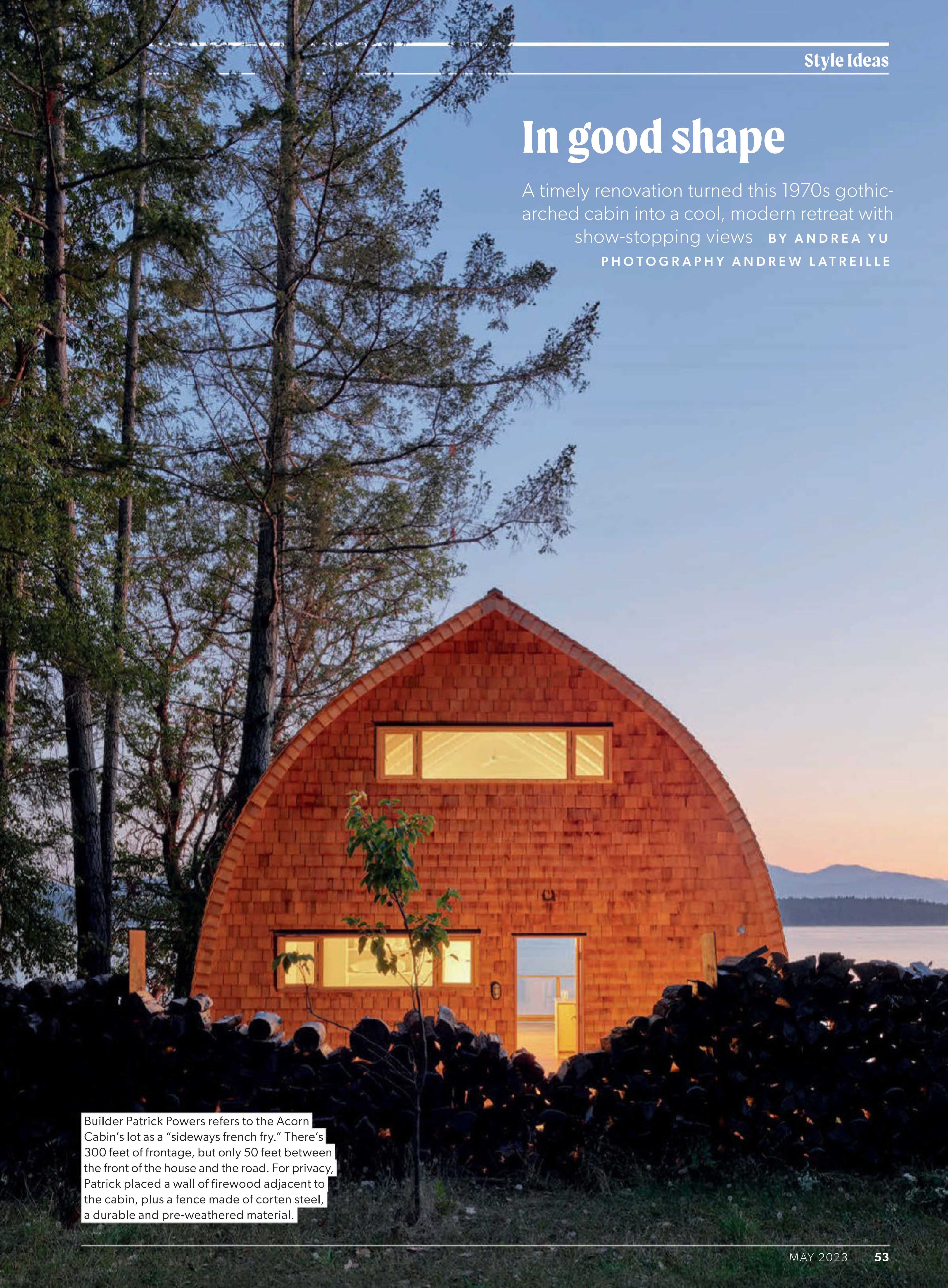
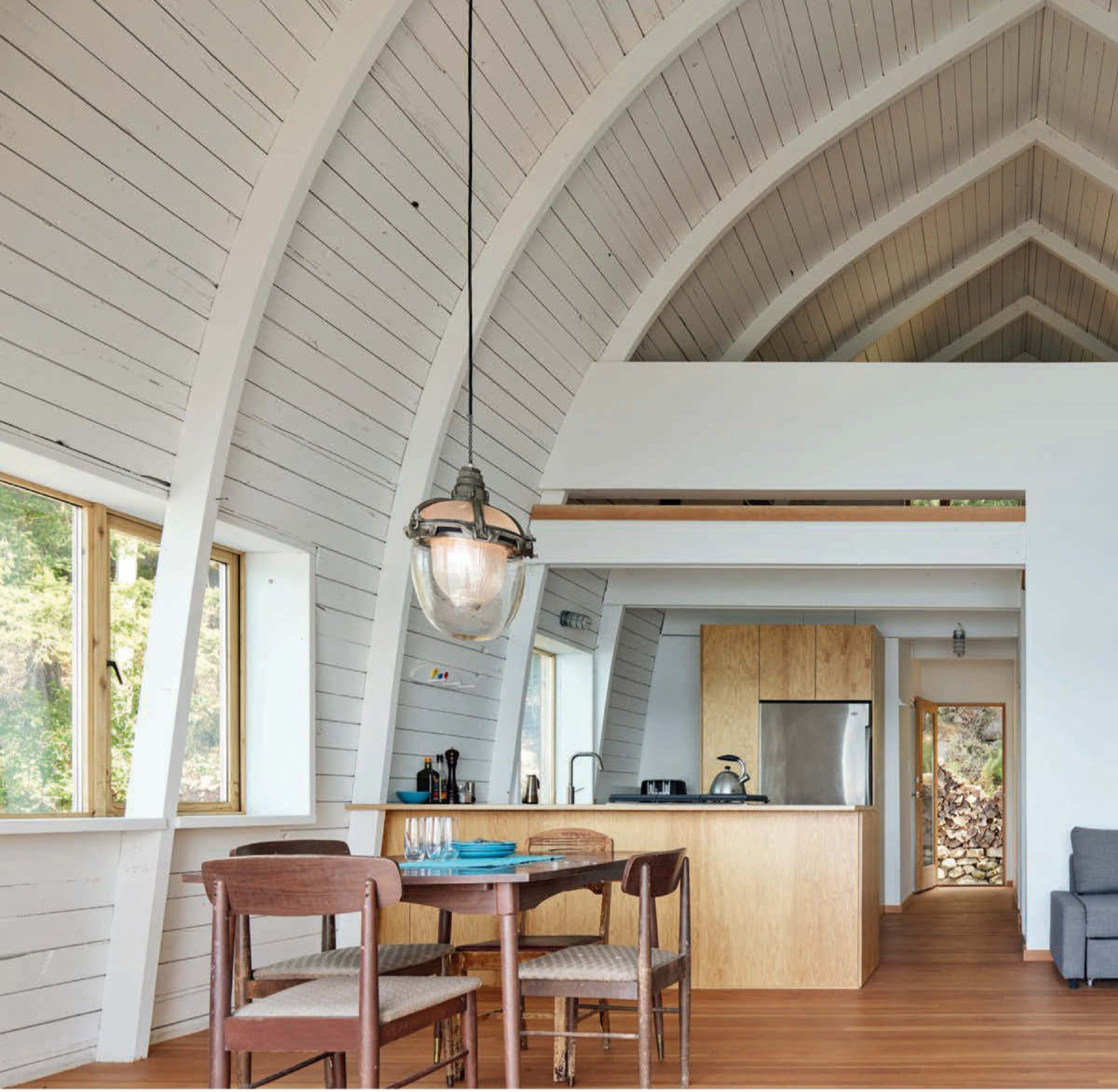
In good shape

A timely renovation turned this 1970s gothic-arched cabin into a cool, modern retreat with show-stopping views **BY ANDREA YU**

PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREW LATREILLE



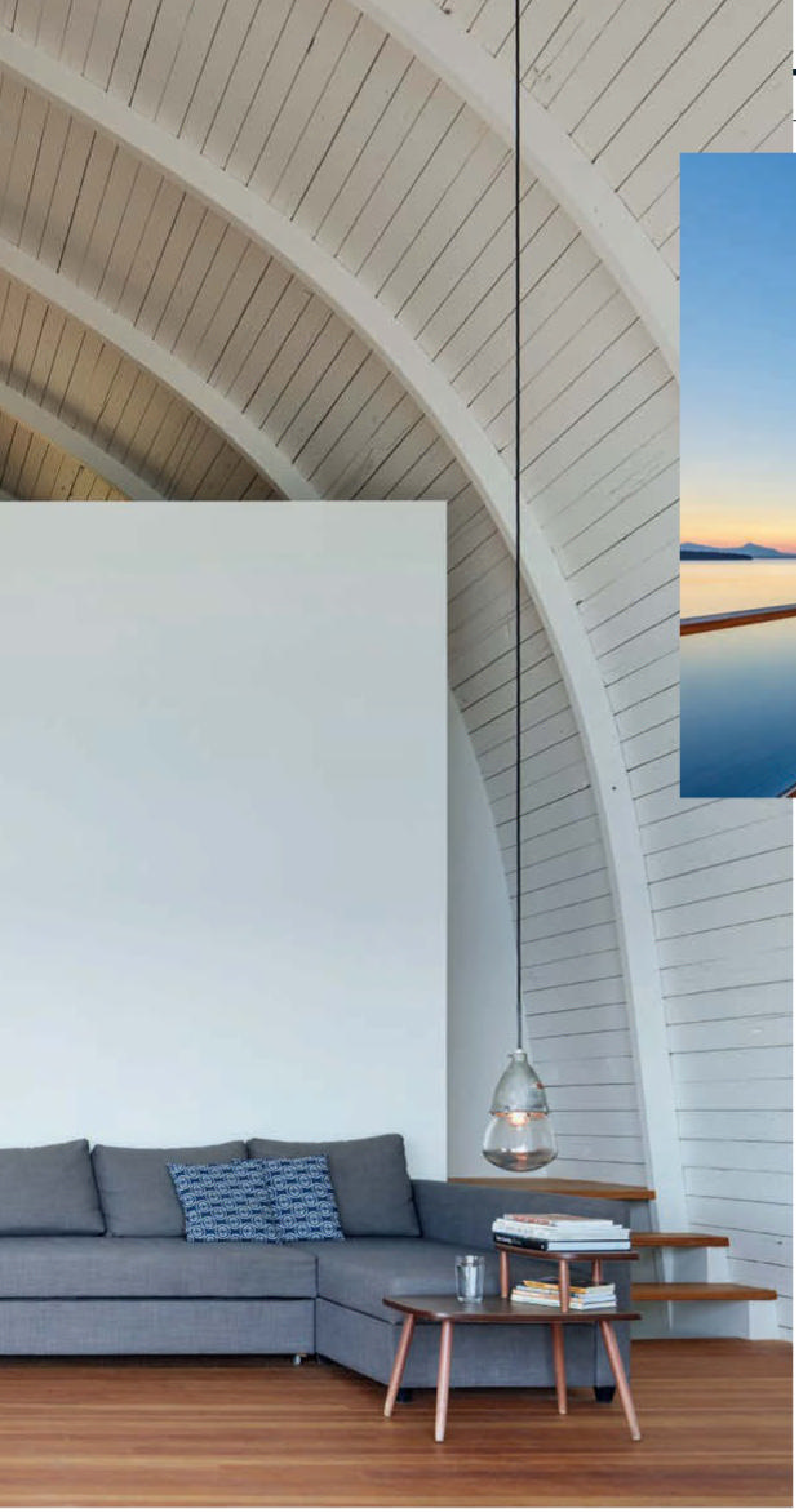
Builder Patrick Powers refers to the Acorn Cabin's lot as a "sideways french fry." There's 300 feet of frontage, but only 50 feet between the front of the house and the road. For privacy, Patrick placed a wall of firewood adjacent to the cabin, plus a fence made of corten steel, a durable and pre-weathered material.

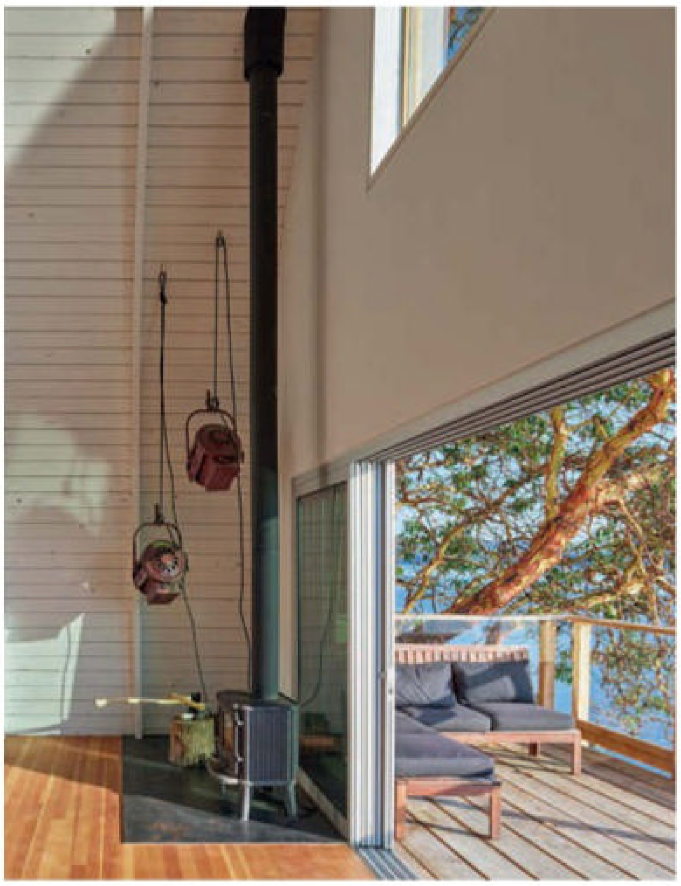


The wood-burning stove in the main living room is original to the cabin (opposite, bottom). Patrick replaced the brickwork beneath it with a modern-feeling sheet of steel to match the steel beams in the basement.

WHEN PATRICK POWERS went hunting for a cottage with his wife, Renee, in 2015, he thought they'd purchase an empty lot to build something from scratch. But when they viewed a one-bed, one-bath gothic-arched cabin on one of B.C.'s Gulf Islands, the couple was smitten. "I'm quite enamoured with A-frames, but the gothic arch has that rounded edge so that your second floor becomes more useful in terms of manoeuvrability," says Patrick. "Additional headroom from the arch is far more functional than a straight A-frame."

The cabin, with a 600 sq. ft. footprint right along the shoreline, was built in the 1970s at a time when construction permits weren't required in the area. "It's effectively sitting right on top of the water. You can't do that anymore," says Patrick. (Buildings in the area now need to be set back from the water by 25 to 50 metres.) Further cinching the deal for Patrick was the property's sunny southwest-facing lot, along with its views of fingerling islands and the mountains behind it. As a kid, Patrick



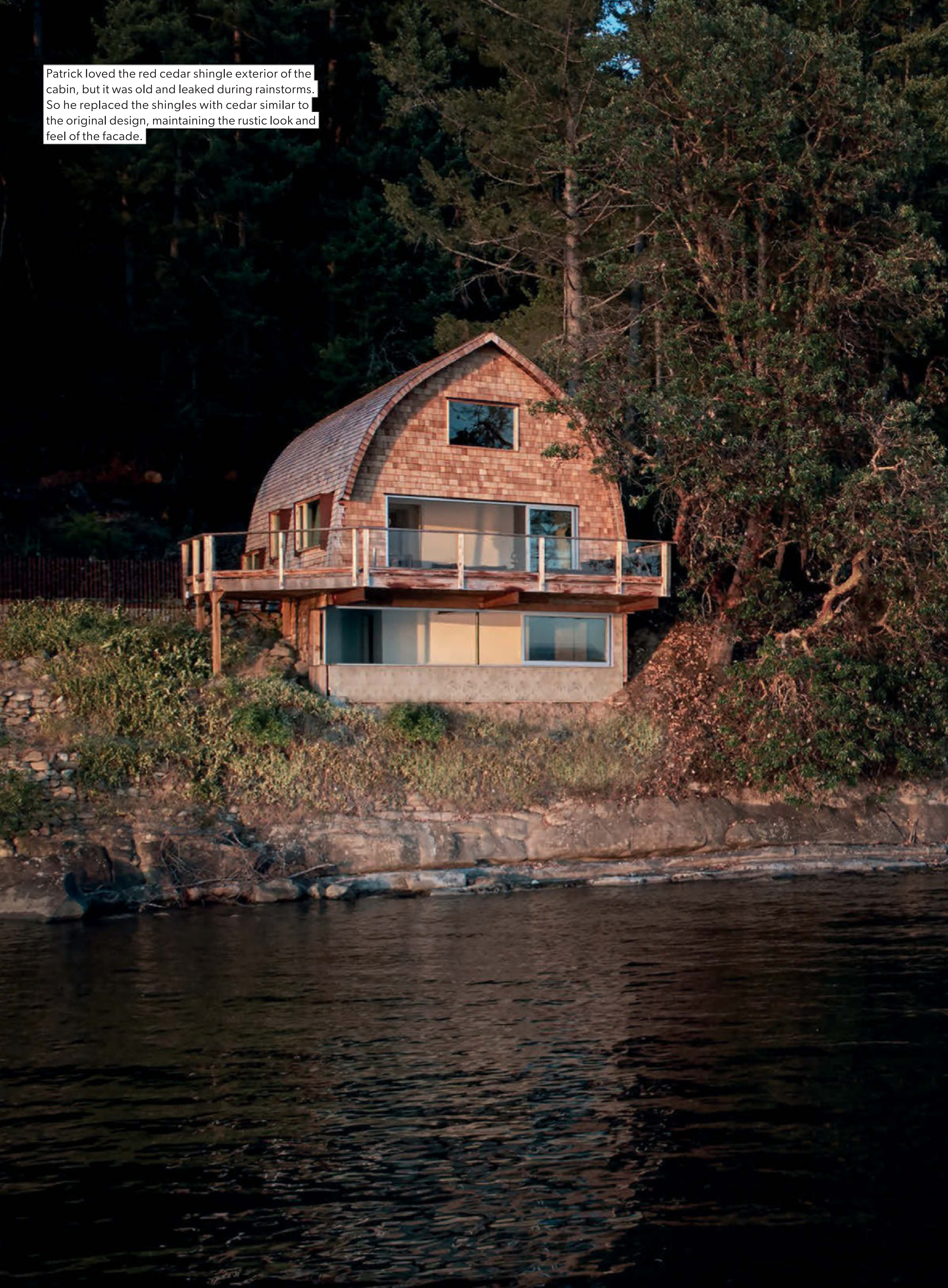


spent summers at his family's cottage on Georgian Bay, so he longed for a similar place where his two young children could be in nature. Once the couple purchased the property, Patrick enjoyed seeing his kids splash around in the water and run along the cabin's beachfront. "My daughter would chase crabs all day long," he says.

After spending three summers at the cabin, Patrick knew that the property needed significant renovations. The wooden structural beams were rotting and the basement crawl space, which had been occupied by sea otters over the years and their food debris (crab shells, ironically), needed to be cleared out. But Patrick knew it'd be worth the effort. Aside from replacing the rotting wooden beams with steel, he envisioned adding a principal bedroom and bathroom to the renovated basement.

Luckily, as a builder, Patrick had the knowledge, and the right connections, to get renovations done in a place where access to labour is limited. "I actually had to bring in consultants by float plane to get them here because they didn't want to take the almost-two-hour return ferry trip," says Patrick. Renovations began in the fall of 2018 to transform the property, which Patrick had since dubbed the "Acorn Cabin" for its rounded structure, into a modern retreat.

On the main floor, facing the water, Patrick opened up the previous eight-foot-wide sliding door entry to span almost five metres, nearly the entire width of the cabin. "When you're sitting inside,



Patrick loved the red cedar shingle exterior of the cabin, but it was old and leaked during rainstorms. So he replaced the shingles with cedar similar to the original design, maintaining the rustic look and feel of the facade.

you're getting as much of that view as you possibly can," he says. The glass panels slide and stack to open up the living space in warm weather. Patrick painted the interior of the cabin white to brighten things up since the original cedar was darker. "It brought a cleanliness to it."

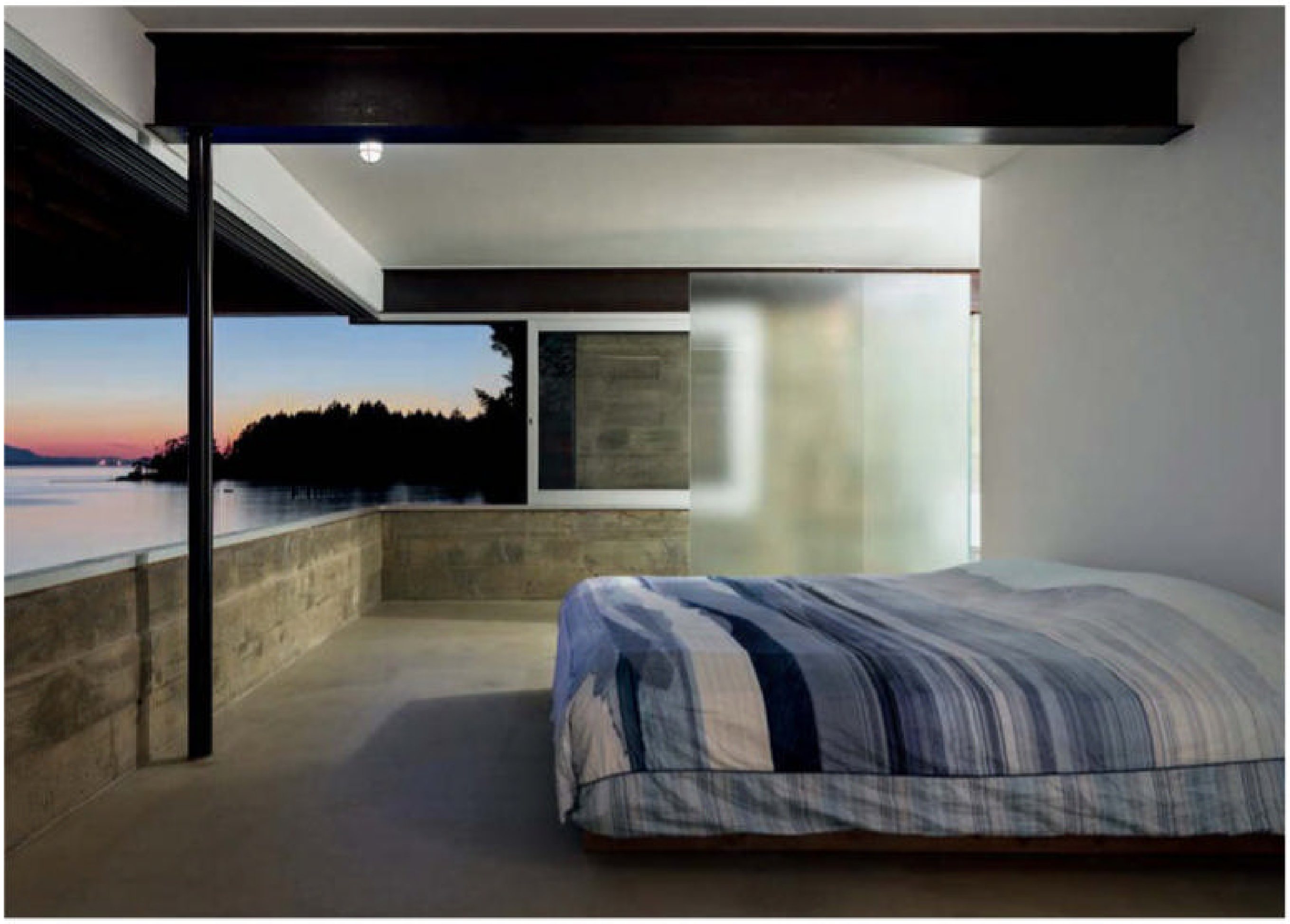
Originally, the kitchen was L-shaped, but Patrick added a peninsula for the oven and a five-burner gas stove. Fir plywood was a functional choice as kitchen cabinetry. "It's very durable," he says. "When your kid smashes it, it just becomes part of the patina."

Behind the kitchen is the first full bathroom on the property. "We put a cast-iron tub right by the windows, so when you're in it, you're overlooking the ocean," Patrick says. There's also a small bedroom across the hallway, plus additional open sleeping space in the lofted level above. To reach the loft, Patrick installed floating stair treads made of solid wood. "When you're standing in the kitchen, you're looking right through the stairs, so it doesn't close in that space."

Clearing out the basement crawl space was the least pleasant task that Patrick had to tackle. "It smelled like rotting fish," he says. "It was gnarly." But the end result made that dirty work worthwhile. He again installed sliding windows along the full length of the cabin, plus one adjoining corner, above a concrete half-wall. "You're able to look just over the top without any obstruction, straight to the water," he says. "The deck above it frames your view. It's an incredibly peaceful bedroom." On the other side of a frosted glass partition is the principal bathroom. "It's a shower with a view," he says.

In the summer of 2019, renovations were completed. But the Powers family only spent one season in their upgraded cottage before they decided to make another change. In the summer of 2020, they sold their house in Vancouver and relocated to Salt Spring Island. By that point, they were living the cottage life day-to-day, so they decided to sell the Acorn Cabin. But Patrick credits their family's time there as inspiration. "It was our springboard into the Gulf Islands," Patrick says.

Freelance writer Andrea Yu's work has also appeared in Toronto Life *and* Maclean's. *This is her first story for* Cottage Life.



When designing the layout for the primary bedroom's open glass shower (above), Patrick took unusual inspiration from his childhood summers on Georgian Bay. "My parents used the outhouse with the door open," he says. "They loved looking at the view. And I think that I took that from them." He did, however, opt to put the toilet behind a door.

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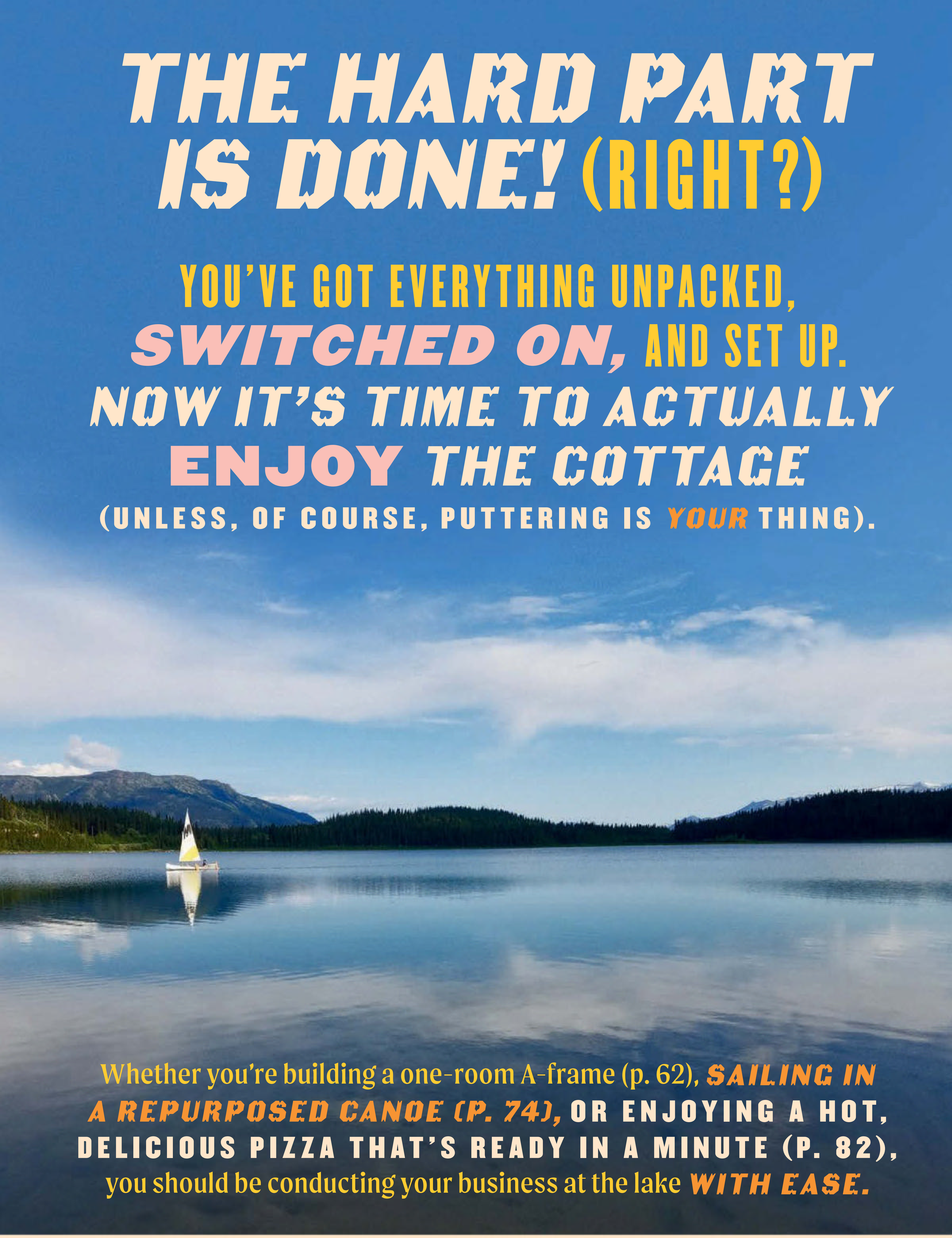


THE HARD PART IS DONE! (RIGHT?)

YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING UNPACKED, SWITCHED ON, AND SET UP. NOW IT'S TIME TO ACTUALLY ENJOY THE COTTAGE

(UNLESS, OF COURSE, PUTTERING IS *YOUR* THING).

Whether you're building a one-room A-frame (p. 62), **SAILING IN A REPURPOSED CANOE (P. 74),** OR ENJOYING A HOT, DELICIOUS PIZZA THAT'S READY IN A MINUTE (P. 82), you should be conducting your business at the lake **WITH EASE.**

HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN A-FRAME IN THE WOODS AND LOOK RAD DOING IT

Cheerfully cool and brimming with good vibes, Andrew Szeto is inspiring millions to manifest their own country cabins

BY DOMINIQUE RITTER

PHOTOGRAPHY KEVIN BELANGER

WITH A BACKWARDS baseball cap on his head and a big, easy smile on his face, Andrew Szeto is sauntering along the "path" up ahead, talking about his plans for his next building project. He wants to put in a dock at his shared waterfront access on Lac Georges, Que., just a short walk from his tiny cabin in the woods. A few paces away, Andrew's girlfriend, Amber Flokstra-Radema, has paused to cast her forager's eye around the forest floor for any mushrooms that may be popping up. Their two large, jubilant dogs, Atlas and Spencer, are roaming through the knee-high ferns and moist, inches-deep moss.

This stroll to the yet-unseen waterfront is more like bushwhacking. But just because you don't know exactly where you are doesn't mean you're not in precisely the right place. Which is to say, some very good things may not be predictable even if, later, they seem to have been entirely inevitable.

Andrew is saying that the "little dock situation" he's going to build—maybe this summer, maybe the summer after that—is going to make their cabin experience that much "sweeter." It all sounds extremely easygoing, but even if the plan isn't totally mapped out, you can believe it's going to happen. Because making things happen is what Andrew does.

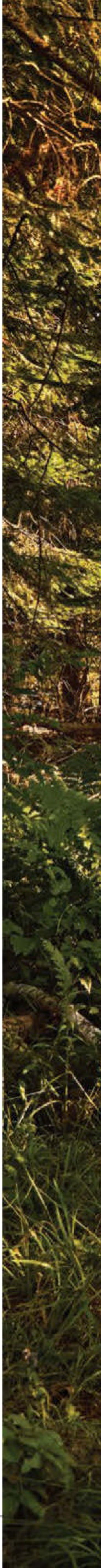
In 2018, when he was 32, Andrew set about creating an A-frame in the woods. He had never built any kind of structure in his life, but he took a month off from his job at Fisheries and Oceans Canada and did the whole thing—from foundation to metal roof—powered by the help of some friends, his gale-force strength of will, and the knowledge he gleaned by watching *a lot* of YouTube videos. And, wouldn't you know, he created his dream cabin in just 30 days.

But to understand how one of the internet's most-viewed DIY A-frame projects came to be, you have to understand a bit about Andrew. And to understand Andrew, we need to talk about skateboarding.

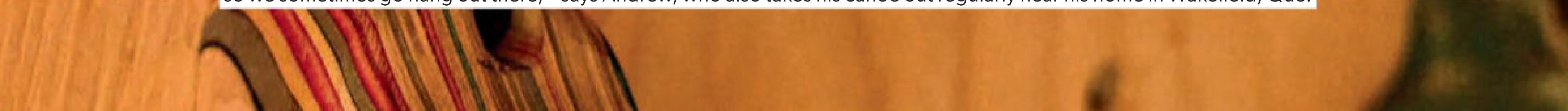
Andrew didn't grow up in the country or spend much time in the woods as a kid. For most of his teen years, you could find him at that most urban environment: the skate park. He wasn't just a skateboarder; he was a serious skateboarder—good enough to have multiple sponsors. Those balletic moves on boards are as specific and complex as the "gnar" skater lingo, but the lessons Andrew took away were simple and foundational: it's all about what he calls the "progression" mindset. "Skateboarding is all, learn the next trick, progress, and learn the next trick, progress, and learn the next trick." This philosophy has come to inform pretty much everything he does and it seems to work on self-propulsion.

For instance, recording tricks is central to skateboarding culture, so Andrew picked up photography and videography skills, which he uses to viral effect documenting his many hobbies. This talent for creating content led him to switch his career from engineering (in which he has two degrees—chemical and environmental) to communications. He now works as a communications advisor to the creative services team at the DFO. ››

▼ Andrew built his cedar-strip fibreglass canoe (opposite) in about 400 hours over the course of a year by customizing a kit from Bear Mountain Boats. He makes his signature paddles (below) using recycled skateboards.



"Lac Georges is not a huge lake, but there are a couple of floating docks out in the middle, so we sometimes go hang out there," says Andrew, who also takes his canoe out regularly near his home in Wakefield, Que.



His hankering for pursuing one challenge after another also guided his transition away from skateboarding and out into nature. With the physical toll of skateboarding beginning to manifest in his mid-20s body, Andrew started devoting more of his free time to motorcycle- and canoe-camping. "I love that," he says. It was under the big, open sky that he started conjuring a cabin in the woods.

Andrew spent the following years squirreling away funds from freelance photography gigs to buy land and build. In 2014, he started combing "everything" (all the real estate listings) "all the time" (when not at work). After three years of searching, he got word from a friend that there was a one-acre lot with waterfront access for sale in Low, Que.

"It was like, 'Wow,'" says Andrew, of his first impression of the land. It had already been partially cleared. It was just down the road from the lake. It cost $5,000. He closed on it in August 2017.

By this time, Andrew's progression theory had landed him at the Ottawa City Woodshop, where, in 2015, "I took a class and built a table, then I was pretty much just hooked. And then it was just one crazy project after another." In the years since, he has made many things—paddles out of recycled skateboards, a restored Eames chair, a canoe—and the making of these things sometimes takes over the space in his and Amber's Wakefield, Que., home. There is currently a mostly done kayak in their living room.

It was at the OCW that Andrew met Richard Scott, a volunteer assistant. "If I had a problem or a question—he would be the guy who would say, 'Oh, I can help you with that.' He just knew everything and could do everything."

Once Andrew had his land, he had another question for Richard. "I was like, 'Hey, do you want to build a home together?' And he said, 'Yeah, I think we could do that.' And I was like 'Holy shit, really? Okay!'"

A year after closing the sale on the land, he and Richard were on-site with a plan. Other friends showed up to lend a hand here and there, but it was Richard who completed most of the exterior by Andrew's side. "He was certainly the brains behind the operation," says Andrew, "and I was just learning along the way. When you find a good mentor, hold on to them," he says. Richard taught him so many essential lessons that continue to play a role in his current work. "Even what I'm doing now, building a sauna, it's mostly teachings from him." ››

5 STEPS TO BUILD YOUR OWN CLIMBING WALL

"The nature of the A-frame really lent itself to a climbing wall," says Andrew. "It was always in the plans from the early stages." It's a big draw for the couple's friends, who will spend hours working out the different routes. His pal Rob planned it all out for him, with routes of increasing difficulty (from "pretty nuts, really hard" to "just insane") marked with their own colour. Want to build your own? Start here:

1

CLIMB A FEW WALLS

"First and foremost, get a bit of climbing experience," recommends Andrew. Understanding what kind of wall is suitable for your needs will help novices as well as parents of kid climbers make a plan. "Go to a gym. Know what you like to climb, what you want to climb."

2

EVALUATE YOUR SPACE

If you're considering a climbing wall, you probably have a good-sized wall with a footprint of empty space below, and it can be tempting to use every square inch. But remember that you can pack a lot of variety into a fairly small space. "I only have a 4-by-10-foot wall, and we crammed seven different routes in there," says Andrew. And think about how using the climbing wall—and its incumbent noise and chalk dust—will affect the spaces and rooms nearby.

3

MAP YOUR VISION

Your research from the first two steps will help you start crafting the plan for your wall. There are loads of great online references to walk you through the process, from basic decisions (angled walls and proper clearance?) to important details (lighting, route mapping). For more experienced climbers, he recommends building in some challenges—such as smaller, more spaced out holds—while "beginners should have holds as close together as possible."

4

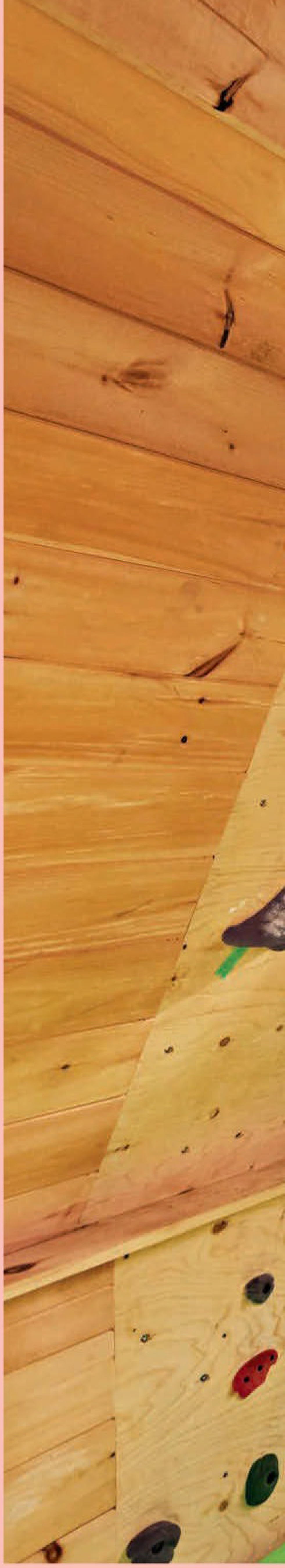
SELECT YOUR MATERIALS

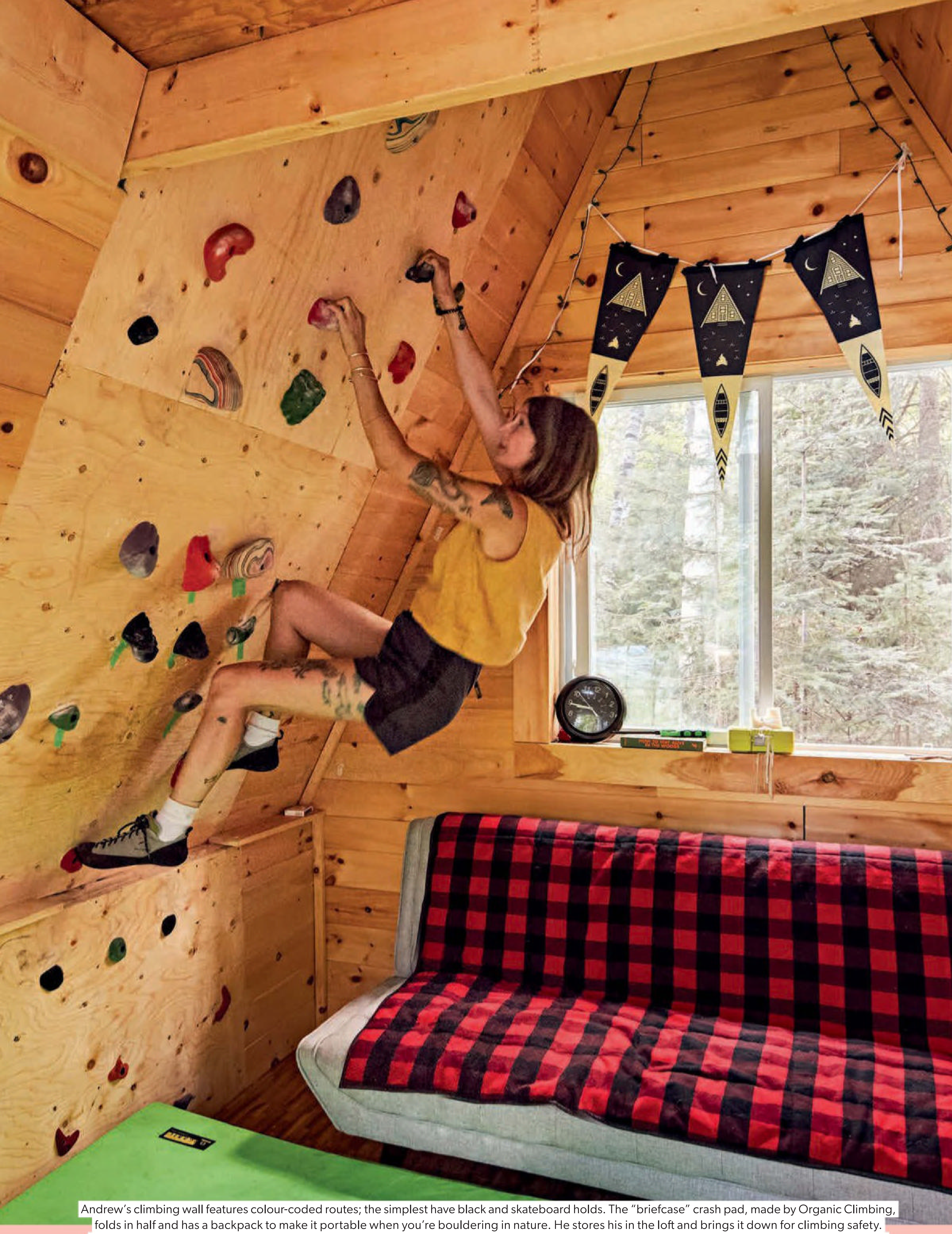
There are three main components to a basic climbing wall: ¾-inch plywood, key nuts, and climbing holds. The plywood needs to be fastened to the studs under your drywall, and "the key nuts will accept most standard climbing holds," he says. Where your choices become vast is in selecting the holds. Andrew made some of his own holds (of course) and bought the rest at MEC, where he chose the brand So Ill. "I really love the holds," he said. "They sell packs of them. They're funky, they have faces on them." And, finally, don't forget a good-quality crash pad to catch your fall.

5

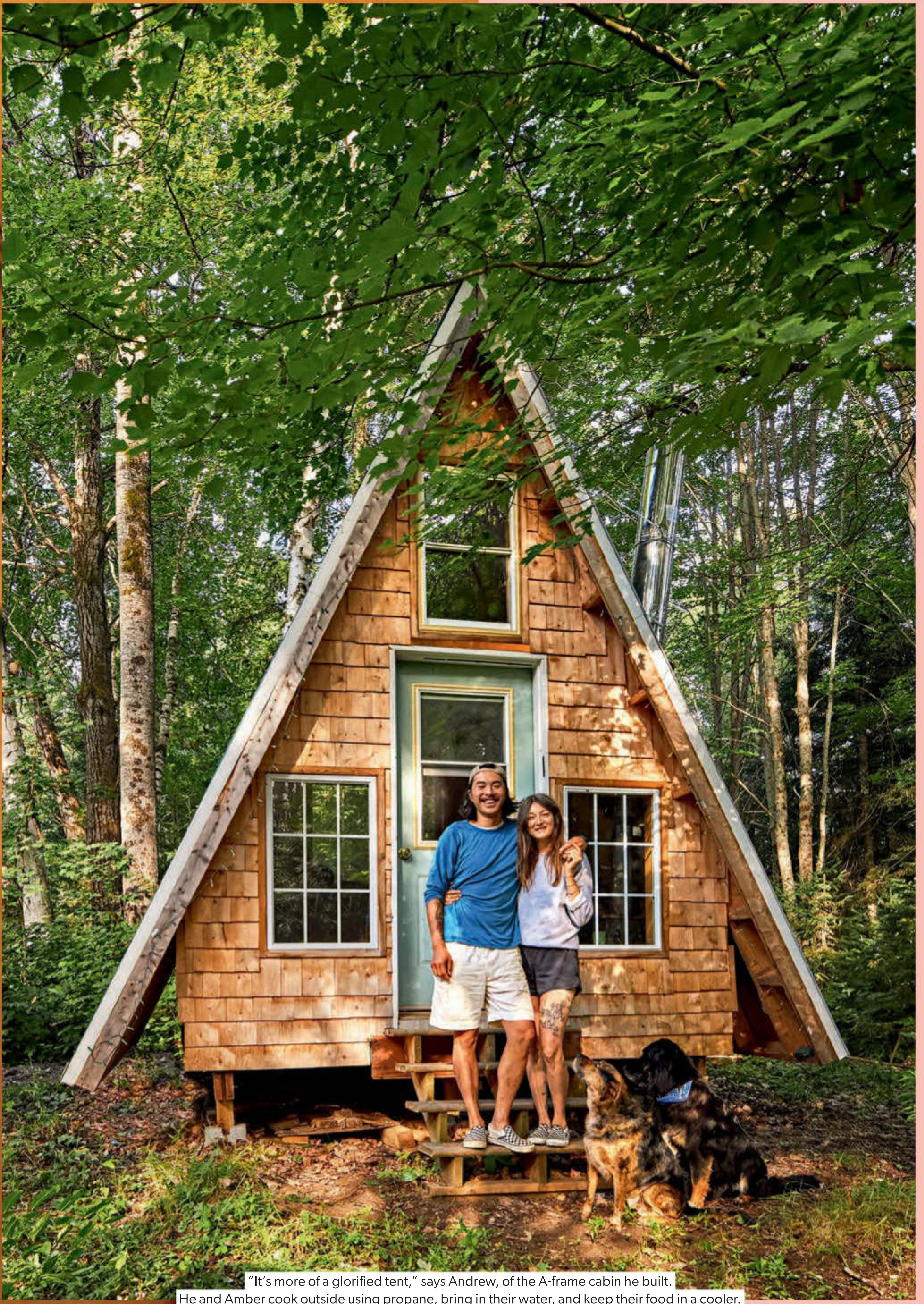
CHOOSE YOUR LOOK

Climbing walls are often very colourful, and Andrew says it's worth considering the impact that will have on the room's aesthetics. "Do you want it to be monochrome or one big, old rainbow on the wall?"





Andrew's climbing wall features colour-coded routes; the simplest have black and skateboard holds. The "briefcase" crash pad, made by Organic Climbing, folds in half and has a backpack to make it portable when you're bouldering in nature. He stores his in the loft and brings it down for climbing safety. Andrew created the pennants, featuring his canoe and A-frame, with Oxford Pennant in Buffalo, NY, "to signify some of the fun builds that I've made."



"It's more of a glorified tent," says Andrew, of the A-frame cabin he built. He and Amber cook outside using propane, bring in their water, and keep their food in a cooler.

For just about everything in his life, Andrew is "SUPER STOKED," he is "MEGA GRATEFUL," and he is always grinning

Sadly, Richard died suddenly in June 2021. His obituary mentions his passion for woodworking and the time he spent at the OCW assisting others, and that he had been enormously proud of the A-frame he built with his friend Andrew. "He was super giving with his time. Just a really good dude," says Andrew. "We would hang out and laugh a lot. We had a really deep bond. I'm very grateful that he was a part of my life."

Richard's legacy is manifest in Andrew's A-frame, where he spent that first intensive month helping his protegé complete the external structure and making sure the following work could happen comfortably inside the well-insulated, heated cabin. That winter, Andrew spent solo weekends finishing the interior with tongue-and-groove pine and finding his way around an 18-gauge nail gun. The following summer, he built a barrel-shaped outbuilding with a composting toilet.

"This is all you need," says Andrew, of his little getaway. The A-frame is sweetly snug with its candles and fairy lights and books. "It's that whole Norwegian cabin culture vibe."

Capturing and transmitting that vibe is key to Andrew's M.O. His passion for building things and his dedication to documenting his hobbies have been mashed together to make a YouTube channel that serves as a rich repository for his seemingly infinite projects.

Andrew has taken DIY building, added the aesthetics of Scandinavian simplicity, and shaken it up with a mixture of charming exuberance and effortless cool. This formula has resonated with a number of people. A large number. The time-lapse video of his A-frame build has reached nearly three million views; his TikToks are social media gold (note: creating siding with old skateboards is perhaps not as niche as you'd think). To fully comprehend his fans' appreciation for him, you must know that it is significant and often expressed with many fire emojis, many hands-up emojis, and the word "rad."

A lot of things that are the subject of viral videos are also available at the Miam Miam General Store, an online and pop-up shop Andrew shares with Amber, where they sell a collection of curated vintage clothing as well as home goods, such as candle holders, plant stands, and coffee tamps made of recycled skateboards, and even beeswax candles shaped just like their A-frame cabin in miniature. Some might call this a side hustle, others, a side *hustle*.

For just about everything in his life, Andrew is "super stoked," he is "mega grateful," and he is often grinning.

So what's the secret to being a couple in a 10-by-10-foot cabin?

"I don't know, playing cribbage? We're really competitive at cribbage," explains Andrew, before he adds, unprompted: "I think I'm the better player."

Would Amber agree?

Andrew again: "Yeah, she would agree with that statement."

Amber, for the record: "He literally doesn't even know the rules!"

In addition to her deep knowledge of cribbage, Amber is something of an expert at thriving in the woods. When the couple met through a mutual friend in 2021, Amber had been living full-time in an off-grid cabin for three years.

"Andrew would come visit me and be, like, 'What the hell? Who are you?'" jokes Amber.

"It was awesome!" asserts Andrew. Living off-grid, Amber's experience featured four seasons of lugging in heavy water jugs for her household needs, falling asleep to loon calls, and sharing her personal space with moose—one morning, she was startled awake by a nosy antlered face staring at her through her cabin window. "She is self-sustaining in the craziest conditions," he says.

There are no crazy conditions on this soft summer day, and the couple is sitting serenely by the campfire. Their A-frame may be small, but Amber and Andrew will often host groups of their friends who pitch tents under the stars or are happy to crash on the cabin floor after days spent in the canoe, or picking raspberries from the abundant bushes that line the road to their waterfront access, or trying to outdo each other on the climbing wall. Many of these friends are the same ones who lent a hand during some phase of the cabin build. "It's my sanctuary, but that includes my close friends and family," says Andrew. ››

With the dogs lounging nearby and the dappled sunshine creating warm lighting that might as well have been ordered up by an art director, Andrew and Amber are very much in their element. A bottle of natural bug spray is spritzed and passed around. They are young and beautiful and stylish and perfectly at home in the woods, naturally warding off insects. The scene seems so perfectly orchestrated that it could be a photo shoot. And, as it turns out, that's exactly what's next.

"Do I look like a lumberjack?" jokes Amber, in the role of playful model. She's just donned a red-and-black plaid flannel jacket, one of a dozen items of vintage clothing that she wants photographed for their shop today.

"You're more of a woodsperson than I am!" responds Andrew, who is taking on the role of encouraging photographer.

The camera starts clicking.

"Maybe axe?" suggests Andrew, in shorthand. She picks up a nearby axe, and the look is complete.

The shot captured, Andrew returns the axe to the A-frame, where it will be kept warm and dry until the next time they need it to chop wood for the fire or, you know, accessorize a photo shoot.

Andrew made the axe himself (naturally). He also makes the firewood himself, in a manner of speaking. Their campfires are stoked with off-cuttings from whatever project he happens to have on the go. There's never any shortage of wood because there's never any shortage of projects.

There may be people who have more projects on the go at once, but you probably don't know any of them. All of which helps explain why the dock isn't being built this very instant.

Back on the not-really-a-trail, Andrew asks Amber what she's found. It's hard to tell if he just referred to her as "love" or "dude," but the two terms are likely interchangeable and equally affectionate.

"It looks like a big one," says Andrew, of the mushroom she's bending down to inspect.

Amber's excited response: "Ooh! Oh my god, it's *huuuge*!"

Underground fungal networks are mysterious and expansive and vital to life on earth. And, when you find yourself in the right place at the right moment, hello, kismet! There's nature offering up a little gift. In this case, king-bolete dinner.

▲ It's a good foraging day when you find so many mushrooms you're forced to consider canning and freezing them. The woods of Lac Georges are home to king boletes, yellow boletes, birch boletes, and golden chanterelles.

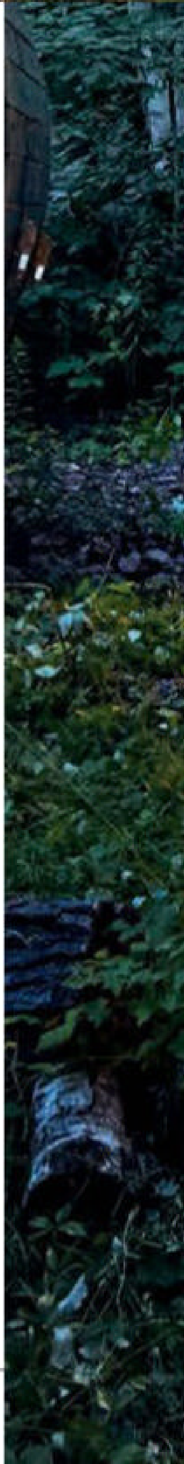
So by now it's starting to feel like, this whole time, Andrew has been weaving some great cosmic tapestry, composed of equal parts hustle and positive energy, and how that, in turn, is supporting and bringing a dose of magic to just about every facet of his life.

How his drive to learn new skills pushed him towards woodworking, where he connected with a mentor who profoundly influenced his life. How, by building an off-grid cabin in the woods, Andrew was perfectly positioned to meet Amber who...lived in an off-grid cabin in the woods. And now they combine their interests—camping, rock climbing, foraging, making candles, building saunas and businesses—so that every aspect of their lives seems interwoven.

And how being a skateboarder taught him to keep moving forward in his pursuits but also taught him the photography and videography skills that allow him to document his DIY projects and serve as the basis for his professional career and mean that he takes the photos for Amber's vintage collection...on-site at the cabin he built.

All to say that, even if we are a teeny, tiny bit lost, we keep going, and we keep finding boletes by the dozen and chanterelles the size of your fist. And even if there's no path through these woods, a conspiracy of good vibes has placed us exactly where we need to be.

Dominique Ritter is a writer and editor based in Quebec's Laurentians. This is her first feature story for Cottage Life.



THERE'S SOMETHING

IN THE WIND

Who says you need to paddle? Outfit your canoe with a set of sails, and let nature do the work

BY FIONA MCGLYNN

PHOTOGRAPHY CATHIE ARCHBOULD

I GREW UP around sailboats, while my husband, Robin, grew up around canoes. So, I was thrilled when one summer he decided to give our aluminum canoe a set of wings. With a few basic materials and a Saturday of dedicated effort, he outfitted our canoe with a rudder, a sail, and the poles to support it—plus leeboards on the sides, for lateral resistance—all of which can be easily removed. Much to our delight, the canoe was a joy to sail, flying effortlessly across the water on a gentle breeze.

Sailing canoes may have been new to us, but they have a long history in Canada. Though it's unclear whether sails were being used pre-contact, there's definite evidence of sailing canoes being used by Indigenous peoples in the 19th century, including an oil painting of a Mi'kmaq birch canoe (*circa* 1850), which hangs in the National Gallery of Canada. In the Pacific North, some of the first sails used on dugout canoes were made from square mats of woven cedar or split cedar slats, later replaced by cloth spritsails.

If you're looking for an interesting woodworking project and a new way to experience the lake—without having to buy another boat—consider making a drop-in sailing set-up. Assuming you own a canoe, the remaining materials cost only a few hundred dollars.

The canoe Canoes with a minimum beam of 90 cm and a minimum depth of 35 cm tend to make the best sailers. Anything narrower will likely be too tippy and anything shallower will likely be too wet.

Your canoe must have enough buoyancy, either through integral or securely fastened flotation, to support a swamping, including the sailing rig, gear, and crew. Also, the canoe should float high enough that it can be bailed from the outside before climbing back in. Keep in mind, sailing will put additional strain on your canoe and some models may need stiffening and reinforcement.

The sail and spars We were able to repurpose a sail and spars—the poles that carry and support the sail—from a sailing dinghy, which saved hours of work. You may have a spare dinghy rig lying around the cottage, or you can find one by searching Craigslist and Kijiji for common makes such as Optimist, Sabot, or El Toro.

Your canoe will sail with anything from a bed sheet to a high-tech Kevlar racing sail. The important thing is to choose the appropriate size. Too large a sail area, and you'll be overpowered and prone to capsizing; too small an area, and you won't move very quickly.

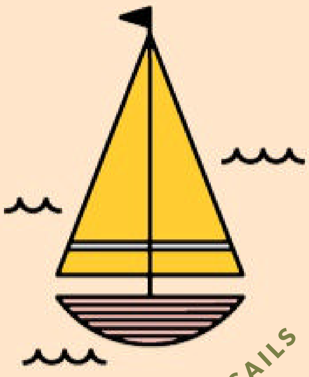
In *Canoe Rig*, author Todd E. Bradshaw recommends a 15–25 sq. ft. sail for a 10–12' canoe, a 25–40 sq. ft. sail for a 12–15' canoe, and a 40–60 sq. ft. sail for a 15–18' canoe. Unless you're an experienced sailor, err on the low side of these ranges, as a smaller sail will be more forgiving. It's also possible to buy sails and spars new, or to make your own (see "Sourcing the Sails and Spars," right). ››

What you'll need

We used plywood for a few parts, however solid lumber would be easier to seal and provide a more aesthetic finish. Choose non-corroding fasteners (e.g., stainless, bronze, or brass).

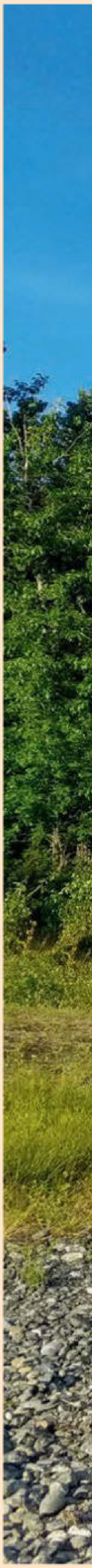
MATERIALS

- ☐ **½ 4x8 sheet of ¾" plywood**
- ☐ **1 12' 2x4**
- ☐ **1 8' 2x6**
- ☐ **1 4' length of 1" dowling**
- ☐ **1 4' 1x4**
- ☐ **50 #8 x 3" wood screws**
- ☐ **16 ⅜" x 3" bolts**
- ☐ **1 25-pack of ⅜" wing nuts**
- ☐ **2 5" sections of ⅜" threaded rod**
- ☐ **2 2" framing angles or L-brackets**
- ☐ **2 3" tee hinges and screws**
- ☐ **Epoxy**
- ☐ **Wood glue**
- ☐ **Varnish for finishing**



SOURCING THE SAILS AND SPARS

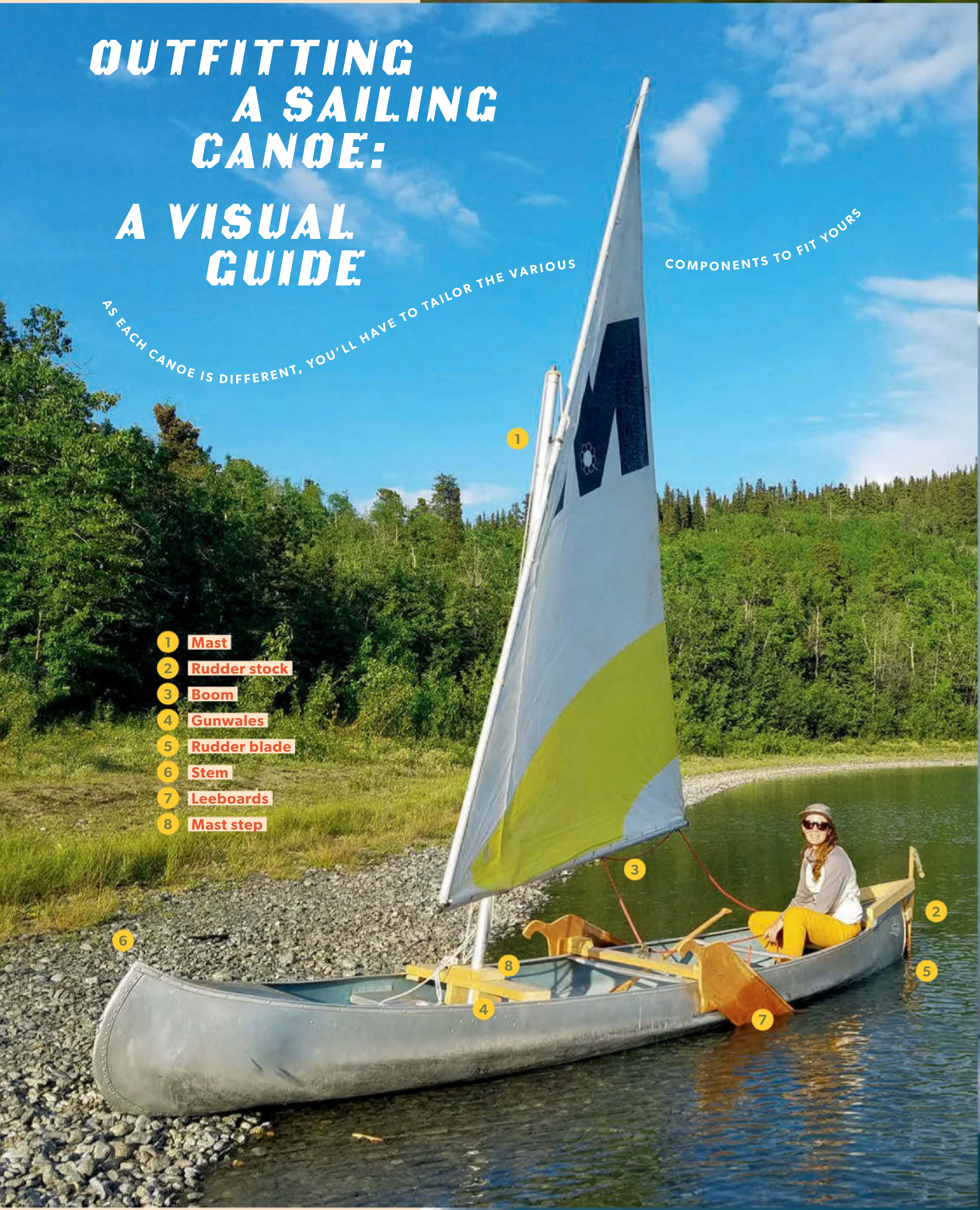
It's possible to buy a canoe sailing package—*sailboatstogo.com*, a company that specializes in portable sailboats, sells kits for **$960** to **$1,810**—but building your own is very rewarding and often a more affordable option. Sails, spars, and necessary hardware can range from **$370** at the low end to about **$1,125** at the high end. Wanna give conventional sail-making a try? *Sailrite.com* is a great resource and sells everything you'll need, including pre-cut sail-making kits.



ILLUSTRATION, VECTEEZY.COM. PHOTO, COURTESY FIONA MCGLYNN

OUTFITTING A SAILING CANOE: A VISUAL GUIDE

AS EACH CANOE IS DIFFERENT, YOU'LL HAVE TO TAILOR THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS TO FIT YOURS



1. Mast
2. Rudder stock
3. Boom
4. Gunwales
5. Rudder blade
6. Stem
7. Leeboards
8. Mast step

RUDDER MOUNTING FRAME, STOCK, RUDDER BLADE, TILLER

TO SAIL, YOU'LL NEED A WAY TO STEER

MOUNTING FRAME

1. Cut a cross brace out of 2x4 so that it spans the width of the canoe and sits on top of the gunwales just forward of the stern deck. Clamp the cross brace to the gunwales (see "Clamping System," p. 80).

2. Cut two 2x4s that extend from the cross brace to beyond the stern of the canoe, far enough to accommodate a rudder skeg (see step 4).

3. Fasten the aft ends of the frame arms together to form a triangle. We beveled the ends of the frame arms so that they would meet at an angle for a cleaner look, though you could connect them with a plywood or a metal plate. Fasten the other two ends to the top outer edges of the cross brace.

4. Cut a 2x4 or plywood rudder skeg that will run from where the frame arms meet to a point lower down on the stern where it will connect to the stem of your canoe and provide rotational resistance. Attach the skeg to the frame arm with two angle brackets.

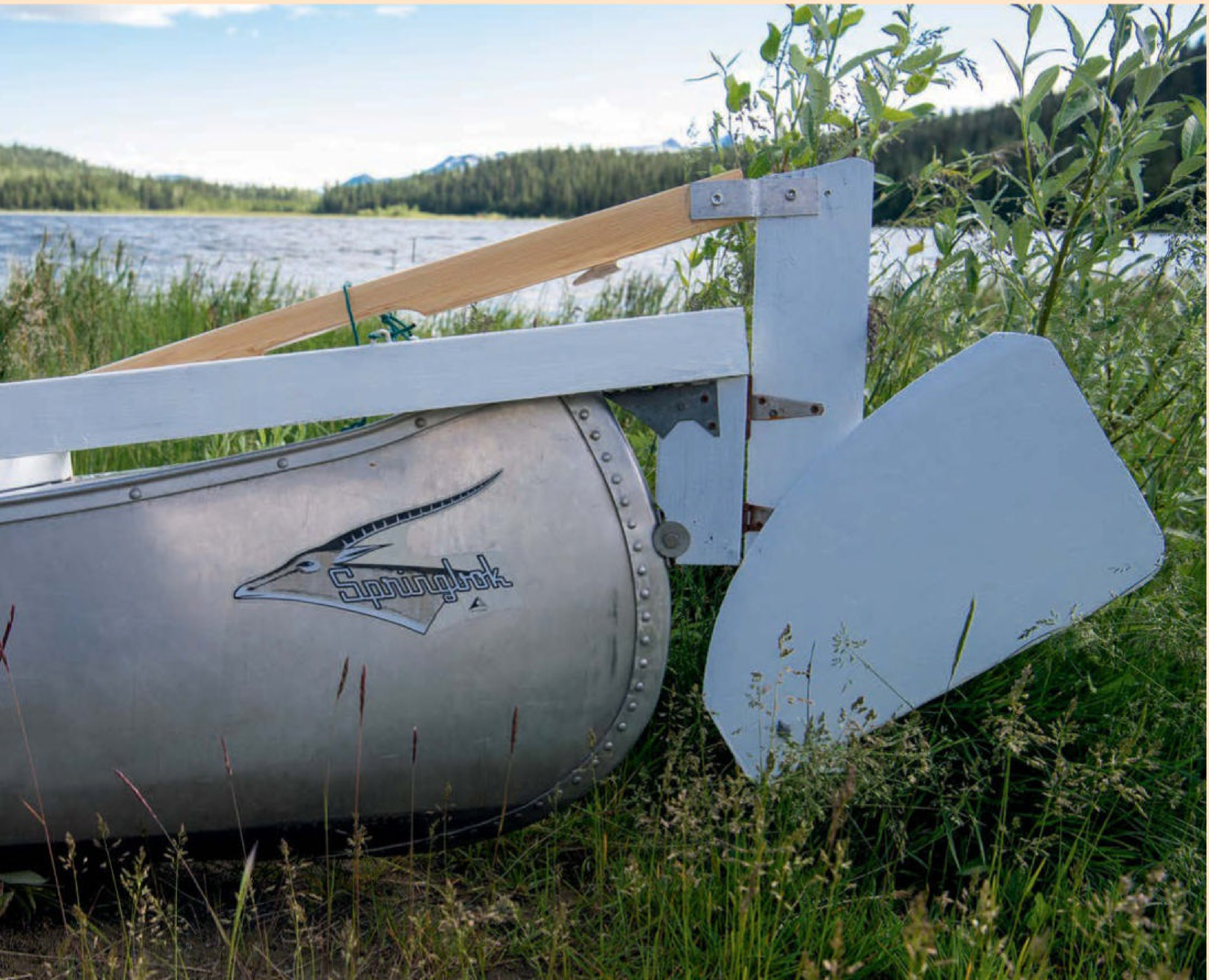
5. Connect the bottom of the skeg to the stem, lower on the stern. We used a bolt with large washers to connect the bottom of the skeg to our canoe's stern pad-eye. You'll have to make a notch in the skeg to accommodate the pad-eye. If your canoe doesn't have a pad-eye, you could install one.

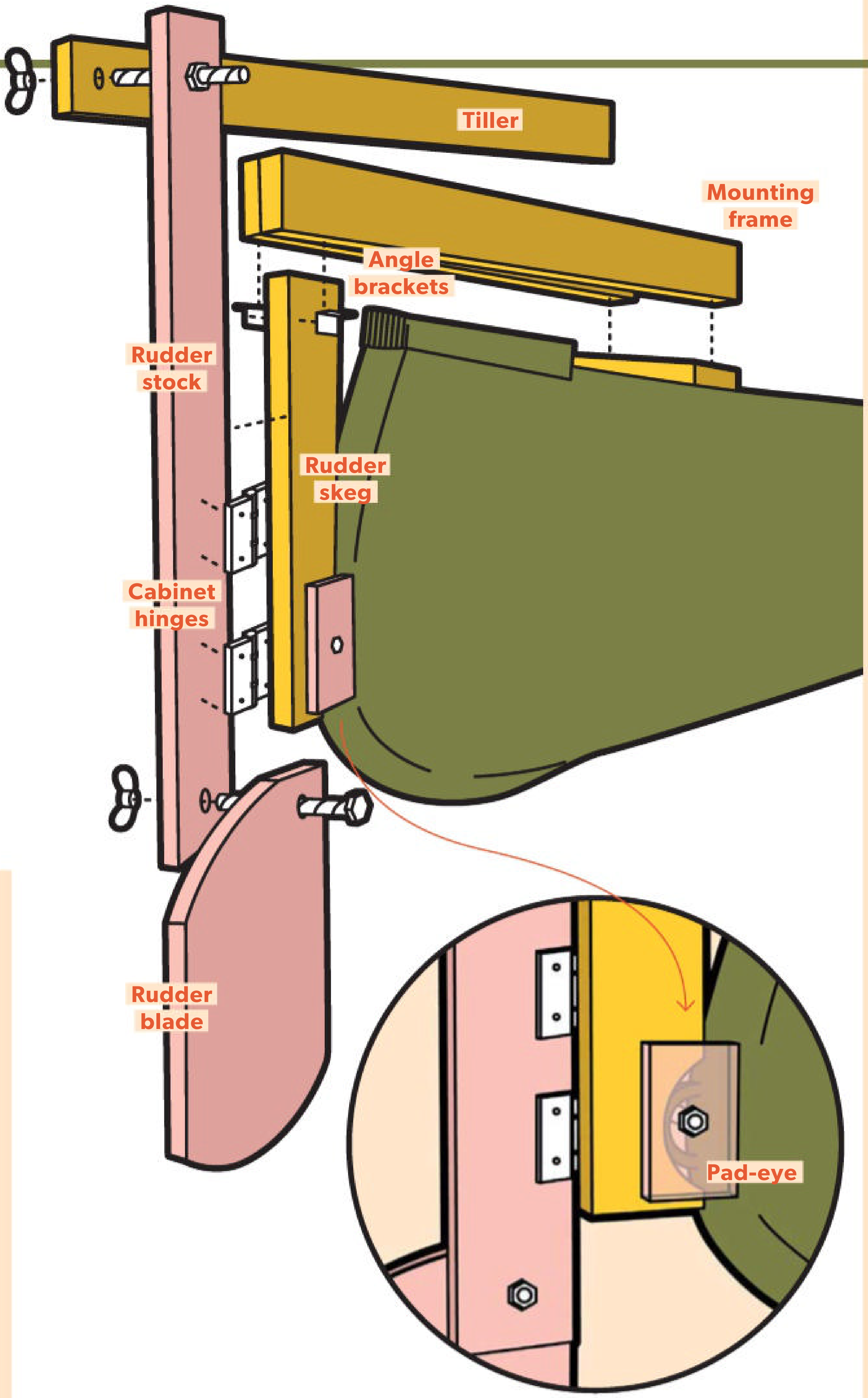
RUDDER STOCK

1. Find the waterline by placing the canoe in the water with an average expected load.

2. Cut a rudder stock from 2x4 in so that it extends above the frame arms (allowing clearance for the tiller) and down to just above the waterline of the canoe.

3. Fasten the stock to the skeg using cabinet hinges, or proper marine pintles and gudgeons if you have them.





RUDDER BLADE

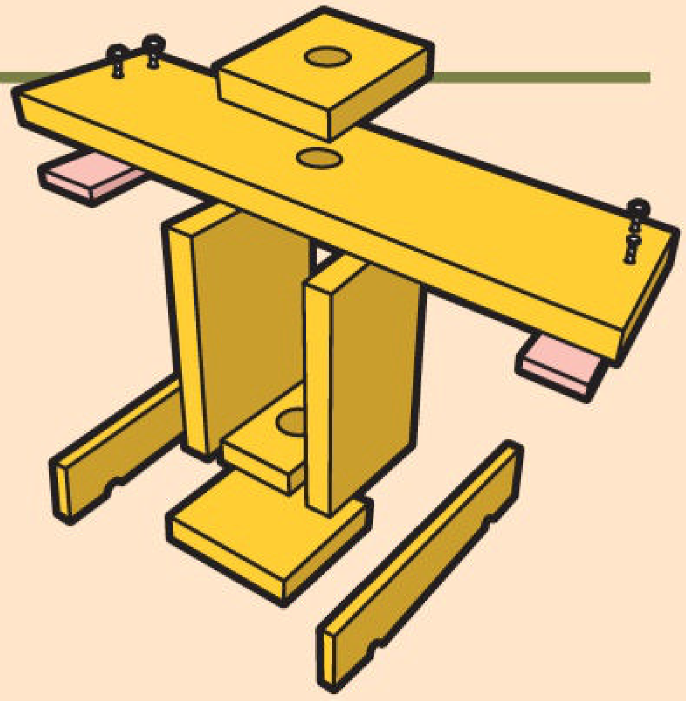
1 Cut a rudder blade out of plywood. It can be rectangular, oval, or any shape in between. It should be long enough to connect to the rudder stock with a minimum 4" overlap and extend at least 12" below the waterline so that it stays submerged when the canoe heels. The surface area of the rudder blade below the waterline should be at least 1 ft^2. Our rudder measured 12"-by-16".

2 Attach the top of the rudder blade to the bottom of the rudder stock—we used a bolt and a wing nut. If you loosen the wing nut, it will allow the rudder to swivel up when launching and beaching.

TILLER

1 Cut a 4'-long tiller (for turning the rudder) from 1" dowling, and bolt it to the top of the rudder stock.

ILLUSTRATION, NATALIE FRANKE



MAST STEP

The mast step is what will hold your mast upright. Many canoe sailors replace the bow seat (or thwart just behind it) with one that has a hole for the mast in it and add a bored-out block in the bottom of the canoe to hold the heel of the mast.

It would have been difficult to replace the seat on our aluminum canoe, so Robin opted to build a mast step out of 2x6 lumber.

1 Cut a cross brace from 2x6 that extends across the gunnels at the location of the mast step, usually just aft of the bow seat.

2 Cut a square base block for the mast step from 2x6.

3 Cut a collar block from 2x6 that is 3" less than the base block to accommodate the sides of the mast step box, and drill a hole slightly larger than the diameter of your mast.

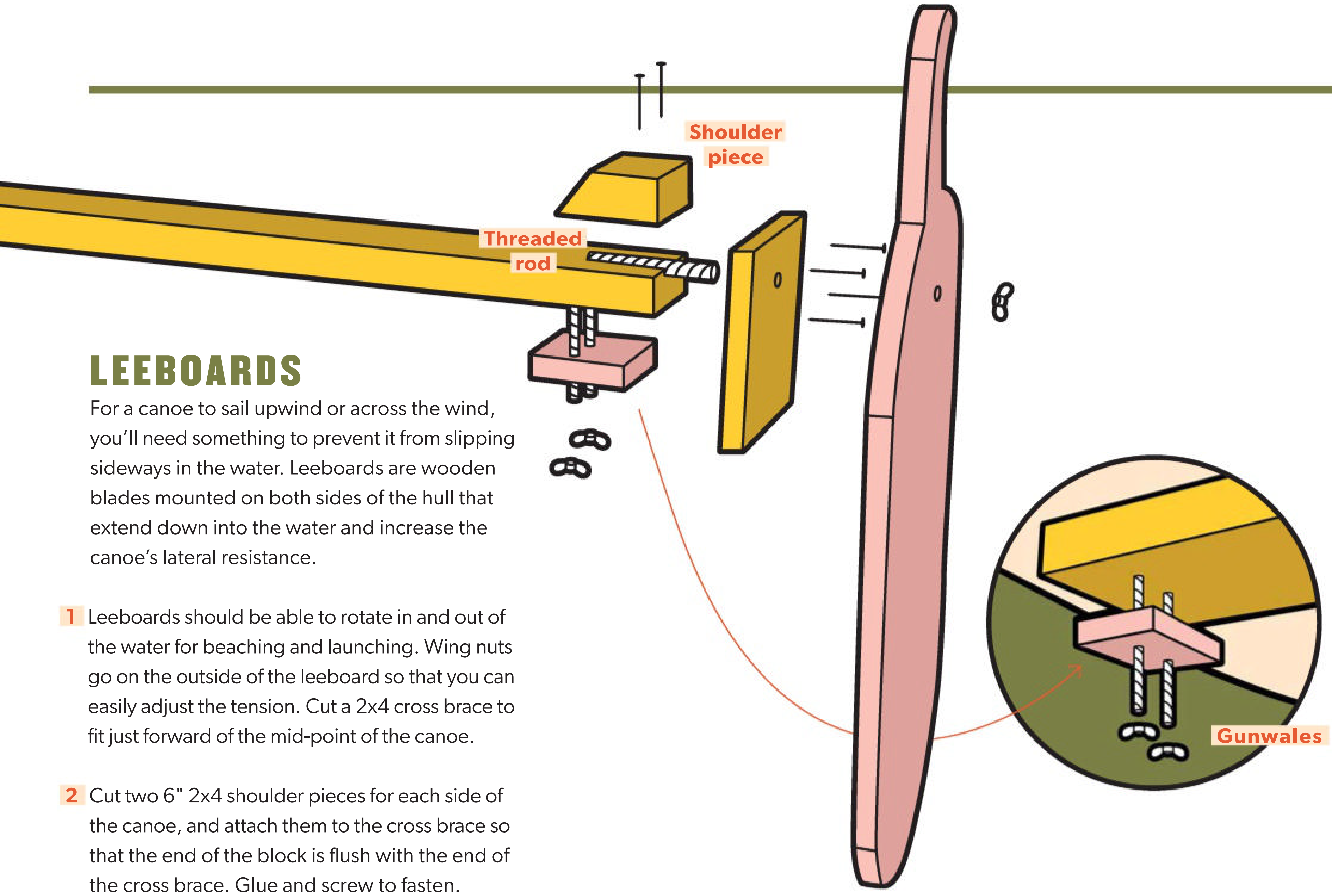
4 Cut the 2x6 side pieces for the mast step box so that they sit on the base block, sandwiching the collar block, and extend to the underside of the cross brace. Fasten all components.

5 Cut runners from 1x4 that attach to the bottom of the mast step, tight to the bottom of the canoe. If your canoe has ribs, cut the runners around the ribs. Otherwise, you will need to brace the runners against something solid like a thwart. The runners provide rotational resistance to wind pressure on the mast. Fasten the runners to the mast step sides and base.

6 Cut another collar block and drill a hole that is slightly larger than the mast diameter and fasten it to the top of the cross brace.

7 Drill a hole through the cross brace in the same location as the hole for the upper collar block.

8 Clamp the cross brace to the gunwales (see "Clamping System," p. 80).



LEEBOARDS

For a canoe to sail upwind or across the wind, you'll need something to prevent it from slipping sideways in the water. Leeboards are wooden blades mounted on both sides of the hull that extend down into the water and increase the canoe's lateral resistance.

1 Leeboards should be able to rotate in and out of the water for beaching and launching. Wing nuts go on the outside of the leeboard so that you can easily adjust the tension. Cut a 2x4 cross brace to fit just forward of the mid-point of the canoe.

2 Cut two 6" 2x4 shoulder pieces for each side of the canoe, and attach them to the cross brace so that the end of the block is flush with the end of the cross brace. Glue and screw to fasten.

3 Cut two 6"-by-6" squares of plywood and fasten them to the ends of the cross brace and blocks so that the top of the plywood is flush with the top of the shoulder piece.

4 Drill a 3⁄8" hole 1 ½" down from the top of the plywood on both sides of the cross brace.

5 Epoxy a piece of 5" threaded rod into each hole so that the threaded portion extends 1 ½" outside the plywood square.

6 Cut two leeboards from plywood that extend at least 12" below the waterline and have a minimum of 1.5 ft wetted surface. Ours measure 48"-by-12" (including the handle).

7 Drill a hole near the top of the leeboard to accommodate the threaded rod.

8 Hang the leeboards on the threaded rods and secure them with a wing nut. Tighten the wing nut to keep the leeboard in the water or loosen it to allow the leeboard to swivel up for launching and beaching.

9 Clamp the cross brace to the gunwales (see "Clamping System," right).

CLAMPING SYSTEM

We wanted to avoid drilling holes in our boat, so Robin opted for a clamping system that uses bolts and wing nuts to clamp 4"-by-4" plywood squares to the gunwales.

OUTRIGGER SYSTEMS

If you'd like to make your sailing canoe more stable and reduce the chance of capsizing, you can add pontoons on both sides of the boat. These can be bought as kits or made from plans. We chose not to add outriggers, but many canoe sailors swear by them.

FINISHING

Protect your canoe sailing rig by applying a few coats of marine-grade varnish or paint to all wood components.

There's something inherently joyous and delightful about canoe sailing–our little boat never fails to attract a few curious onlookers! One friend was so enthused that he built a rig of his own, and we now get together for races in the long summer evenings. So, don't be surprised if you spark a sailing canoe revolution on your lake.

Fiona McGlynn cruised from Canada to Australia on a 35-foot boat with her husband, Robin. She now lives north of 59 degrees and runs waterbornemag.com, *a website about sailing.*

5
TIPS FOR SAILING A CANOE

①

LEARN TO SAIL ON A SAILBOAT

Sailing canoes have no ballast and are much narrower than your average sailing dinghy, which makes them unforgiving and more challenging to sail.

②

DO A TEST RUN

Try out your systems and sailing skills close to base and have an experienced buddy with a safety boat nearby.

③

SAIL EQUIPPED

Always carry the necessary boating safety equipment—including a spare paddle—and wear a PFD. If the water's cold, wear a dry suit.

④

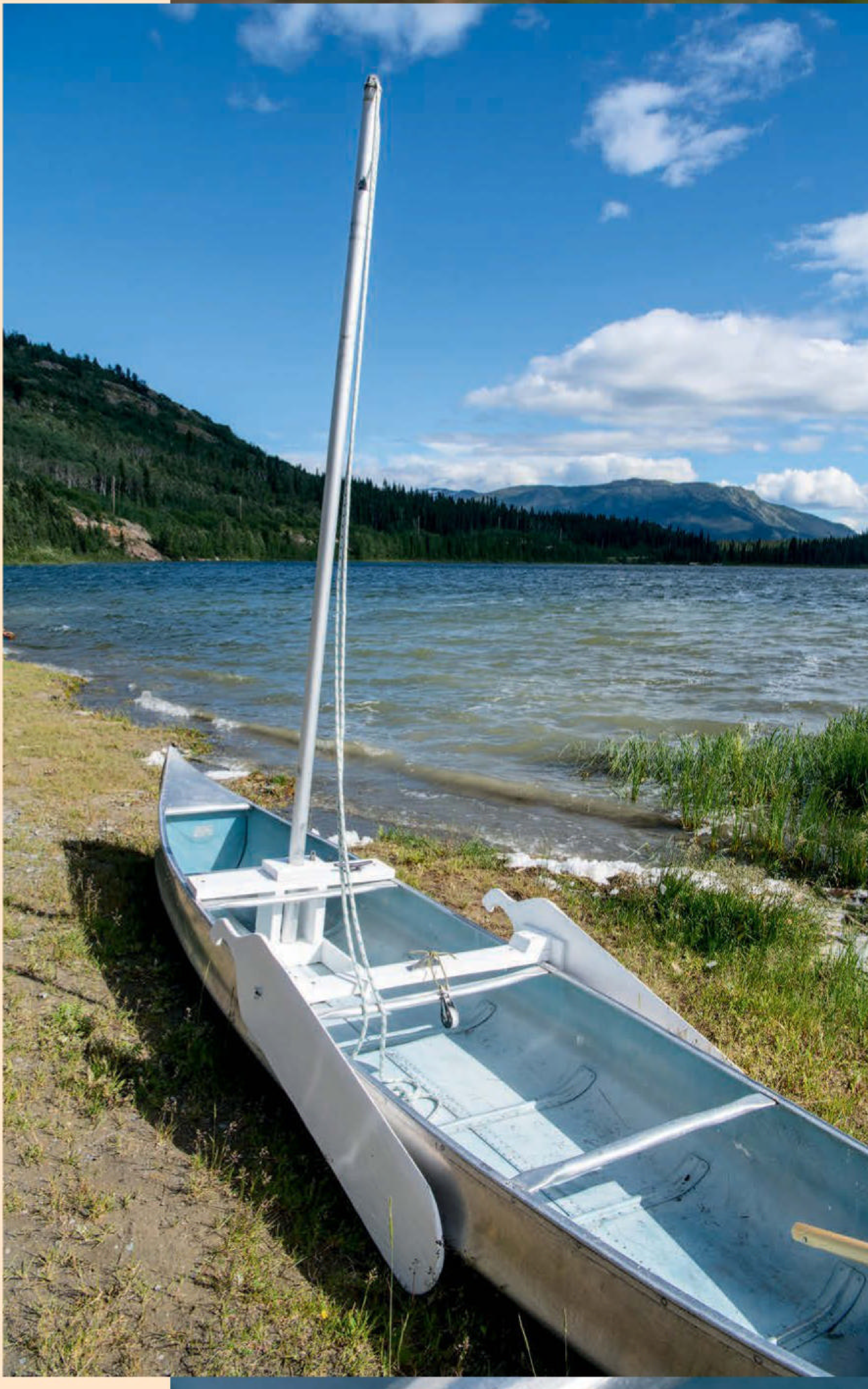
WATCH THE WEATHER

Stick to calm, protected, inland waters, and choose your conditions carefully. Beginners should stick to forecast winds under 11 km/h.

⑤

PLAN FOR CAPSIZING

Rehearse your self-rescue strategy in a safe and controlled practice session. Ensure that you can easily remove the mast boom and sail while you are in the water.



OPPOSITE, ILLUSTRATION: NATALIE FRANKE

ooni

CRISPY CRUSTY CHEESY CHEWY

Pizza ovens are the hot thing—and for good reason. They get food on the table in a flash, and everyone can DIY their dinner. What's more cottagey than that?

BY MARTIN ZIBAUER | PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM MOGAN

A **AS PEOPLE DRY** off from their last swim of the day, the balls of dough are finishing their second rise. The dough is ready to be hand stretched, and the canned San Marzano tomatoes have been crushed, not pureed, so the slightly bitter seeds remain whole.

You're ready for the three very opinionated camps among your friends: sliced buffalo or fior di latte mozzarella, olive oil, and fresh basil for the Margherita purists; tomatoes, oregano, and garlicky sauce for the Marinara crowd; and a hodgepodge of prepped toppings for the kitchen-sink fans—who are planning to ignore your advice and overload their pizzas.

Luckily, your new pizza oven only takes about 20 minutes to heat up, and it can blast each pizza to perfection in as little as two minutes, so you can feed everyone their custom pizzas almost as quickly as they can make them. ››

▶

OONI KARU 12

The Scottish-engineered, portable Ooni Karu 12 can convert from wood or charcoal to propane or natural gas and fits a 12" pizza. (The larger Ooni Karu 16 has additional burners for more even cooking.) 950°F max temp. 15-mm cordierite base. 12 kg. **$519** (plus **$139** for gas burner); *ca.ooni.com*

PLUS **TOPPINGS GALORE!** ~~ 8 fun new combos for an entire summer of pizza parties

▲ You can't go wrong with delicious ingredients. Put out a spread of choices, or make groupings for suggested topping combinations. (See p. 86 for inspiration.)

ROCCBOX
GOZNEY

▲

GOZNEY ROCCBOX

The compact Roccbox heats to 950°F with propane or the optional wood burner, while the silicone outer jacket keeps the surface safe to touch briefly. Cooks an 11" pizza on a 19-mm cordierite floor. 20 kg. **$599**, plus **$100** for detachable wood burner; *ca.gozney.com*

More heat gives you more pizza options. A kitchen oven maxes out around 500°F—too cool for a Neapolitan thin-crust pizza, but okay for thicker Sicilian-style pies. Although a barbecue gets hotter, the heat comes from below. That's great for steak and roasted peppers, explains Rocco Agostino, the executive chef of and partner in Toronto's Pizzeria Libretto restaurants, but "pizza crust on the barbecue cooks through too much before the toppings get hot." To meet the official standards of a Naples-style crust—blistered surfaces, leopard-like spots of char, and soft, moist interiors—pizzas need at least 905°F.

About a decade ago, massive brick and concrete ovens, the ones that cottagers sometimes build as DIY projects, started to see serious competition from smaller backyard pizza ovens. Made with a shell of heavily insulated sheet steel, many of the newer ovens are big enough for a pizza but not much more, so they heat up faster with less fuel. Some ovens use a small wood fire to heat the chamber. Others use propane or natural gas flowing into barbecue-like burners, and a few burn wood pellets or charcoal.

▲

PIZZACRAFT PIZZERIA PRONTO

The propane-fired Pizzeria Pronto is a basic unit with dual cordierite stones for pizzas up to 14". Because it only heats to 700°F, crusts are crisper top to bottom. 12 kg. **$452**; *pizzacraft.com*

The choice of fuel divides cottagers along the same lines as the barbecue wars of the last century: charcoal and wood for flavour, propane for convenience. Agostino uses propane in his backyard Ooni Karu. "I have two kids who won't wait around for pizza," he says, "and it's not in the oven long enough to absorb much smoke anyway."

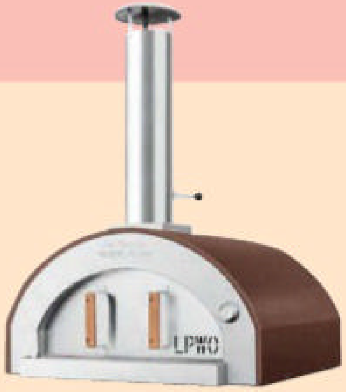
That's true, agrees Glenn Satnarain, but "I can smell wood smoke around the oven. And on my clothes. It's ambiance." As the operations director for barbecue retailer Turn Up the Heat, in Concord, Ont., Satnarain has tried many different ovens. Propane, he says, is surprisingly popular for pizza parties, even without the ambiance. "Guests are actually more willing to cook their own pizzas in a propane-fired oven. Nowadays, everyone is familiar with gas barbecues."

Cottagers who choose built-in pizza ovens, which need a masonry base and typically cost between $3,000 to $5,000, often incorporate them into a full outdoor kitchen project, says Satnarain. The large ovens are versatile and can fit several pizzas at once, alongside big chunks of wood. (Once large pieces start burning, the fire needs less babysitting than a small oven requires, explains Satnarain.) ››

RECIPE ONLINE

▲ Use your favourite dough recipe, or pick up a bag of pre-made dough from the grocery store. Alternatively, you can use our quick, no-fail recipe. Find it online at *cottagelife.com*.

1
Corn Off the Cob

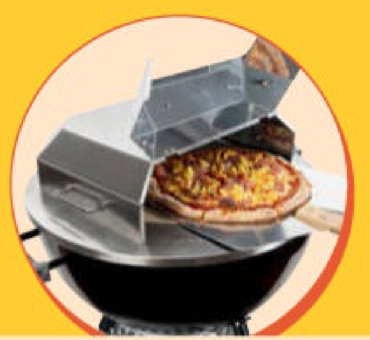


▲

LA PIAZZA TOSCANA

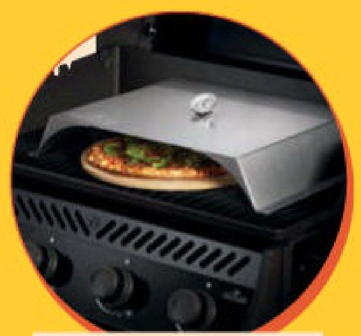
This is the wood-fired oven that chef Lynn Crawford uses at her cottage. The cool-to-the-touch shell is 2-mm thick stainless steel, with 14 cm of ceramic fibre insulation, and the base is 32 mm cordierite. “Extra insulation means our ovens heat fast and retain heat,” says La Piazza’s managing partner Tom Edelenji. “After you’re done making pizza, you can still bake bread or lasagna, which need long, steady heat.” The oven can stay outdoors for pizza all winter, or you can store it inside on its optional rolling stand. 160 kg. **$2,499** (**$2,999** with stand); *lapiazzawoodovens.com*

UNDER THE HOOD



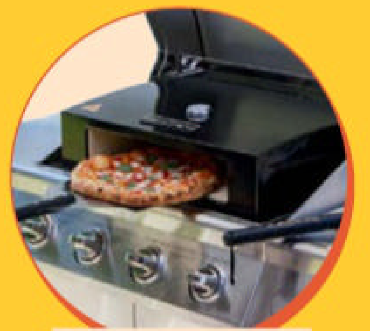
Onlyfire Universal Stainless Steel Pizza Oven Kit

This kit swaps out the lid of your 22" charcoal kettle-style barbecue with a basic, low-profile pizza cooking chamber. Heats to about 800°F, but the uninsulated chamber means it cools quickly if the coals die down. 15"-diameter pizza stone. 5.4 kg. **$210**; *onlyfire.com*



Napoleon Stainless Steel Pizza Add-On

This 23" by 16" metal hood, paired with a stone, turns your standard gas grill into a pizza oven to allow convection heating to about 840°F. 4 kg. **$130**; *napoleon.ca*



Bakerstone Pizza Oven Kit

This propane grill accessory sits atop a barbecue grate. Depending on the juice in your barbecue, the internal refractory stone box can heat to about 750°F—that’s not Neapolitan standard, but it’s enough to cook a pizza in two to four minutes. 15" by 14" chamber. 12.7 kg. **$190**; *bakerstonebox.ca*

A TOPPING BY ANY

2
Tropical Storm
5
The *NEW* Windsor

Pizza Paddle

Use a peel, or paddle, to rotate pizzas a few times while cooking to help the crust blister evenly. "Dust your peel with cornmeal or semolina, not flour, to keep the uncooked crust from sticking and to add a nice texture," says Glenn Satnarain. This 12" diameter pizza paddle has a compact folding handle and a round pizza-spinner shape. **$61**; *weber.com*

3
Goat's Got the Beet
4
Sweet Darlin'

OTHER NAME WOULD TASTE AS GOOD

1

Corn Off the Cob

burrata base + drizzle of olive oil + sautéed corn & leeks + black pepper

2

Tropical Storm

tomato sauce + porchetta + mango slices + pickled shallots

3

Goat's Got the Beet

pesto sauce + cooked beets + goat cheese + oregano + walnuts

4

Sweet Darlin'

tomato sauce + peaches + speck or prosciutto + burrata + pistachios + drizzle of honey

5

The *NEW* Windsor

tomato sauce + chopped dry salami + antipasto bar mushrooms + Taleggio + basil

NEED MORE IDEAS?

6

Get Rich Quick

tomato sauce + cooked squash + ricotta + caramelized onions

7

Heat Lovers

tomato sauce + rapini + basil + hot Italian sausage + pepperoncini + basil

8

Taste Maker

tomato sauce + 'nduja + shaved fennel + burrata + drizzle of honey

Freestanding ovens, on their own integral stands, can be moved inside for winter storage, while portable, countertop ovens—most costing less than $1,000—can sit safely on a wood picnic table while in use and are easily stored away. The lightest "tailgate" ovens, including the 12-kg Pizzeria Pronto, can travel to the beach or to your favourite picnic island.

Most ovens—even the tailgaters—rely on a cordierite ceramic base, similar to a pizza stone, to retain heat and absorb some steam from the crust. Thick bases retain heat but add weight; lightweight ovens tend to cool quickly and need time between pizzas to reheat.

There's a similar trade off between portability, durability, and cost. Some inexpensive ovens reduce the weight and price tag by using less cordierite and thinner steel.

If you're not ready to try a dedicated pizza oven, there are accessories that improve the pizza capabilities of a barbecue. Some add-ons sit on top of a kettle grill; others fit inside the grill chamber (see "Under the Hood," p. 85). They typically can't get as hot (or stay as hot) as a dedicated oven, so they're better suited to pizzas with crisp "Roman-style" crusts.

Martin Zibauer's favourite childhood pizza was English muffins, spaghetti sauce, and cheddar cheese, broiled.

▲ **TUSCAN CHEF MEDIUM TAPERED OVEN ON CART**

The separate firebox in the base simplifies restocking the fire with wood, and "you won't get ash on your pizza," says Satnarain. A versatile outdoor oven that can bake bread or roast a turkey, its chamber has two levels and a temperature range of 250°F to 950°F. 100 kg with cart. **$1,599**; *tuthbbq.com*

JUST GRILL IT

Broil King 15" Pizza Stone

A ceramic composite pizza stone holds and distributes heat, and protects it from the flames below. To use, place the stone on the grate, then light the 'Q, so the stone heats up gradually (if you place the cold stone in a hot barbecue or oven, it can crack). Once the stone is heated through, place the room temp pizza on the hot stone and cook. **$50**; *broilkingbbq.com*

Atlas Steel Average Joe Baking Steel

An unbreakable alternative to pizza stones. This 14" by 16" steel, with handy finger holes, is a hefty 6-mm thick. **$129**; *atlassteelco.ca*

Lodge Pro Logic Cast Iron 15" Pizza Pan

Preheated in your barbecue, like a ceramic pizza stone or a baking steel, the ripping hot surface of Lodge's cast iron pan transfers its heat energy into a pizza, coming close to the conditions inside a pizza oven. **$80**; *kitchenstuffplus.com*

▼ No pizza oven? Don't cancel the party. Cook your pies on the grill with a pizza stone or metal pan. (Check out some options at right).

PIZZA STONE

OONI OVEN AND STAND LOANS: COOKERY AND TURN UP THE HEAT

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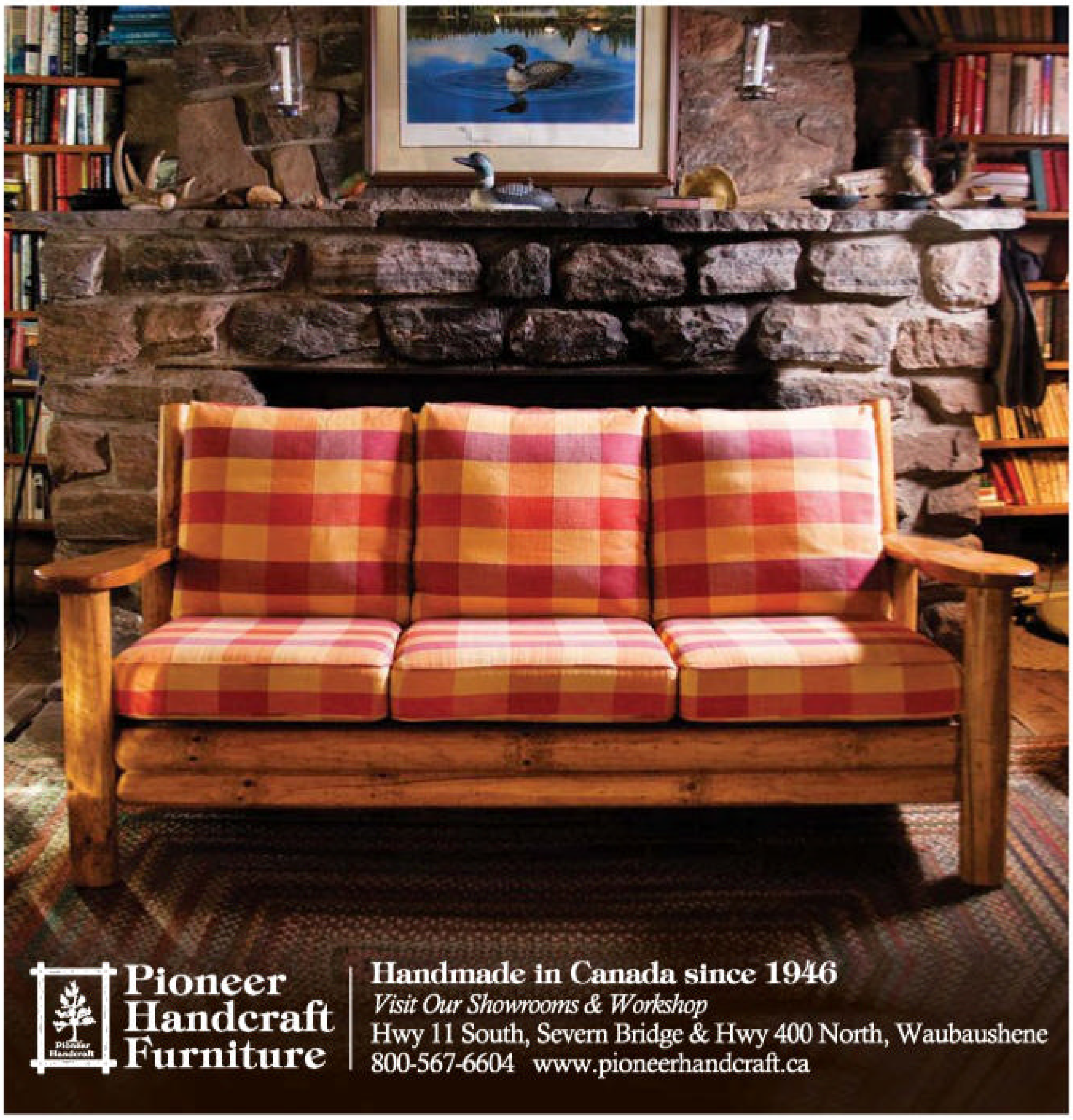

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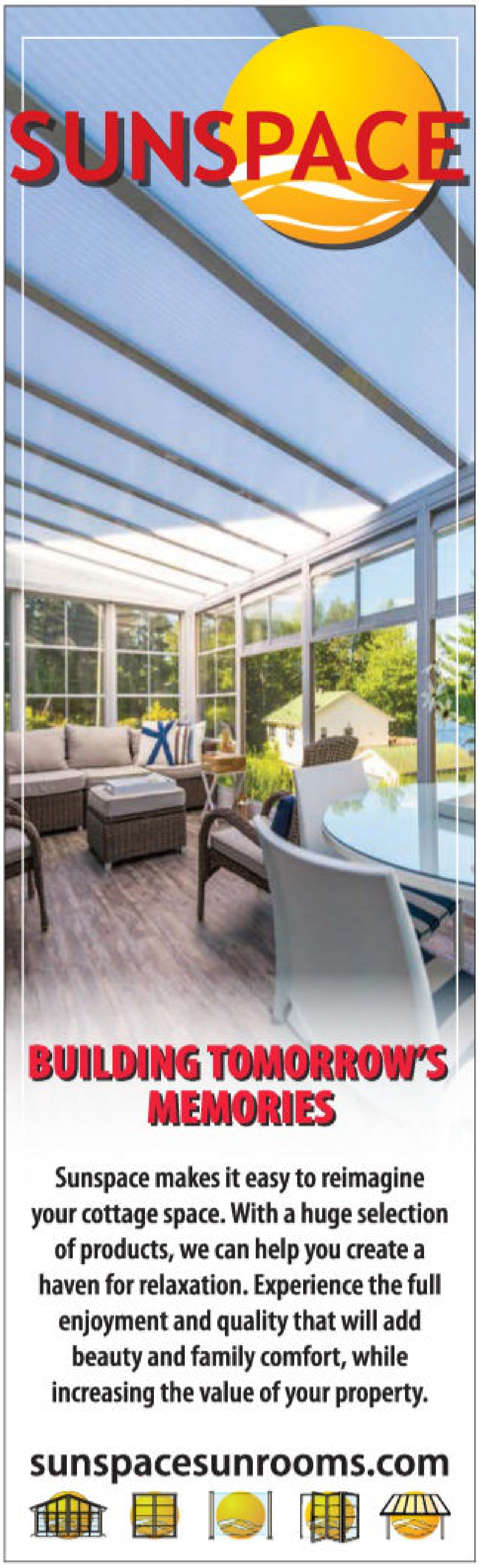

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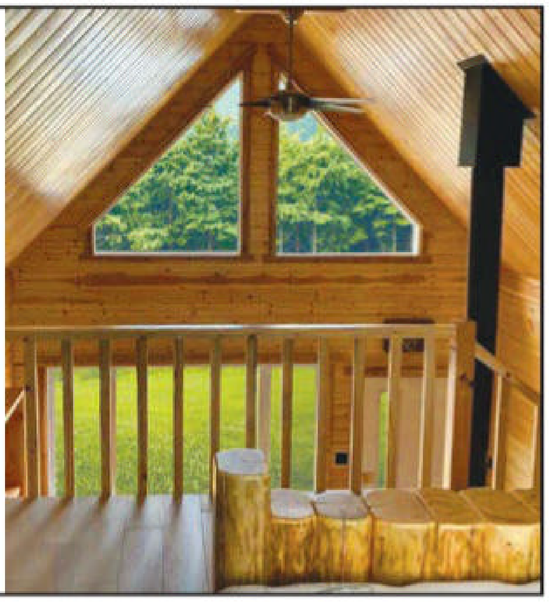

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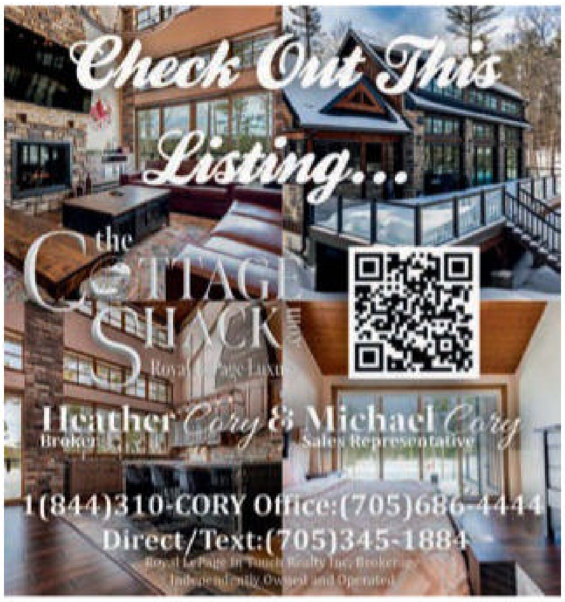

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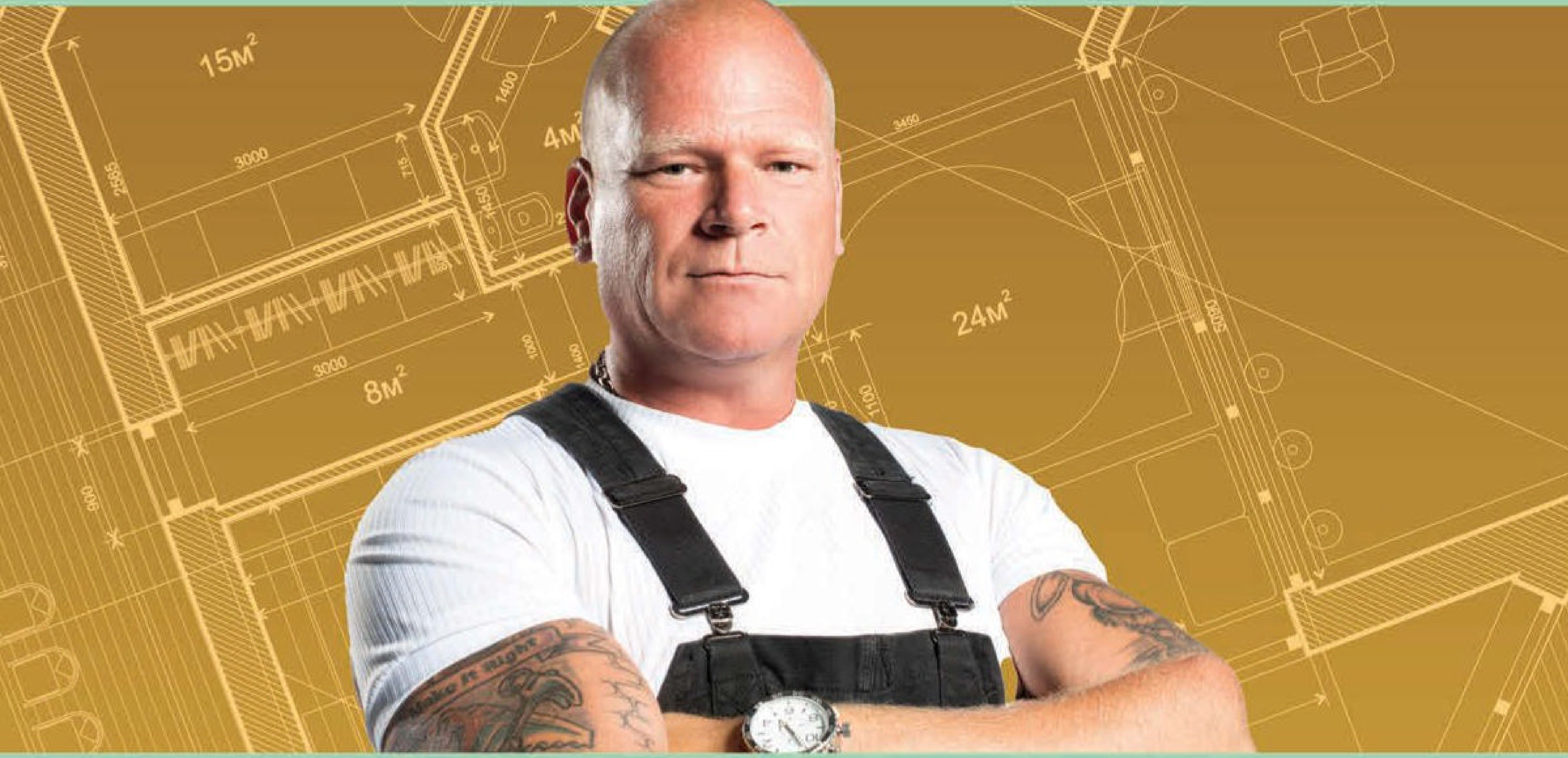

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Track star

As the largest deer species in the world, it's no surprise that moose can beat you in a race just days after being born

BY TIM TINER

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/MARK BYER

ON THE MOVE

In spring, moose often appear near roadsides, sipping winter salt runoff after lean months of browsing on sodium-devoid twigs.

BABY BUMP FOR LIFE

Moose cows are pregnant for most of their lives, the large majority birthing once a year in spring, about eight months after conceiving under autumn leaves in forests across Canada.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

When moose go into labour in May or early June, they may wander widely for a day, looking for a birthing spot on an island, peninsula, or hillside where they're secluded from predators or have a good view of all approaches. Delivery can last two hours, with fluffy, metre-long newborns weighing as much as a cocker spaniel, about 14 kilograms.

#TWINNING

While most cows deliver a single calf, 10 to 30 per cent have twins, especially where nourished by abundant patches of prime willow, birch, and aspen saplings that sprout after fires or other forest clearances.

FIRST PLACE GOES TO...

Moose calves grow faster than any other animal in North America. They can stand within hours of birth, outrun a human within days, and weigh up to 180 kilograms in five months.

ADULT BULL WEIGHT

400 to 600 kilograms

SHIELD AND PROTECT

Mothers fiercely defend their charges, staying close to them around birth sites for a week or so, then gradually leading them farther afield, keeping to cover. The following spring, they drive them off a few weeks before giving birth again.

THAT'S A LOT OF VEG

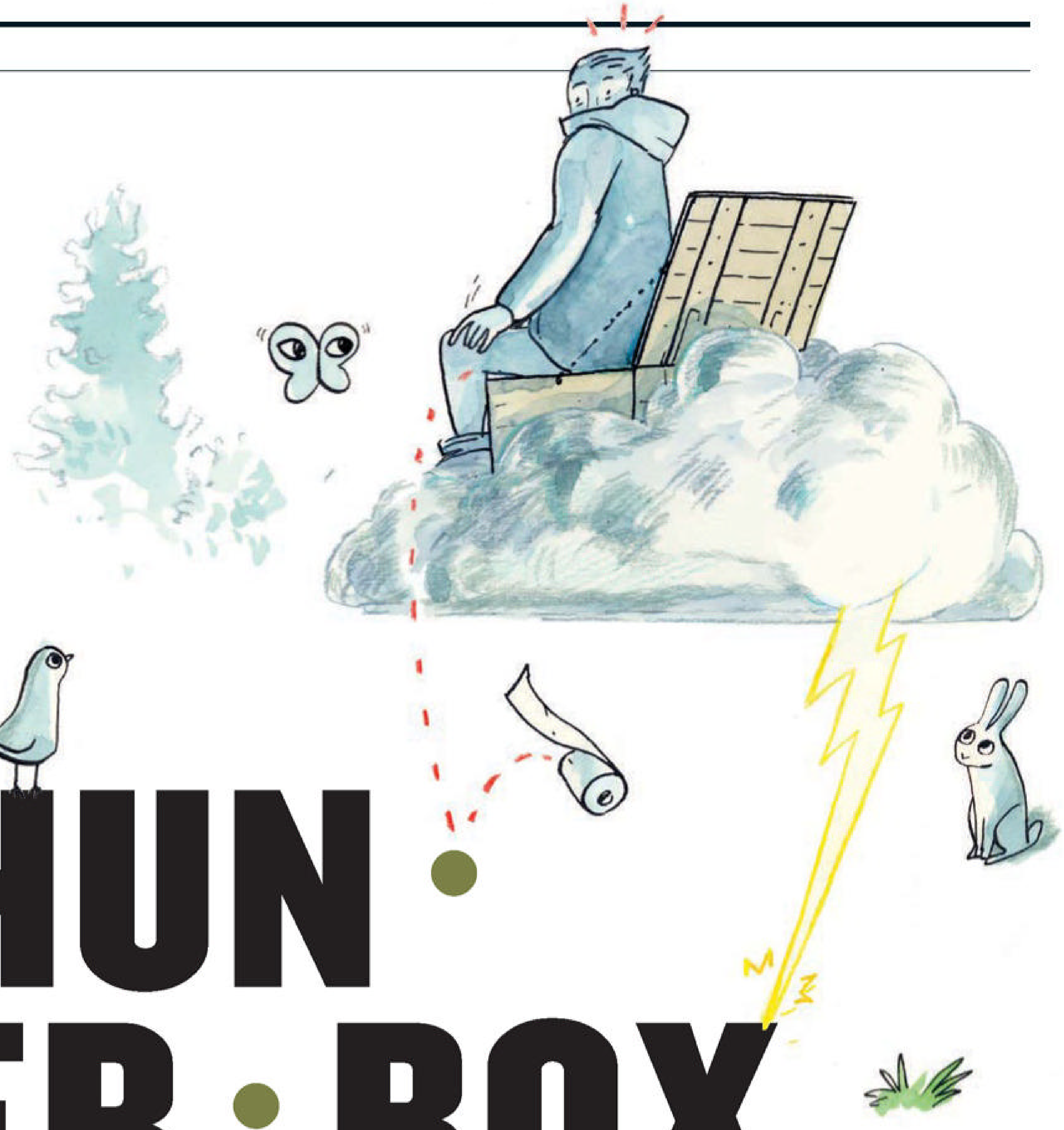
Mothers may devour more than 30 kilograms of leaves, water lily roots, and pondweed to produce up to four litres of thick, creamy milk a day. Infant calves nurse seven to nine times every 24 hours and begin nibbling greens within two weeks. They're not fully weaned until autumn.

THE CULLING

Every spring, newborns boost moose populations by 20 to 25 per cent. Wolves and bears claim up to 40 per cent within a month. Afterwards, about 95 per cent survive through the rest of the year.

ADULT BULL SHOULDER HEIGHT

1.7 to 2.3 metres



THUN·DER·BOX

/ thuhn · dr · baaks / noun

1. A portable seat-on-a-box placed over a hole in the ground
2. For when a storm's a-brewin'

Use it in a sentence
Have you tried the new thunderboxes at Algonquin Provincial Park? There's nothing better than doing your business with a beautiful view.

We want to know: what words do you use at the cottage but nowhere else? Email us at edit@cottagelife.com.

GRAHAM ROUMIEU

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